

**GREATER BIRMINGHAM & SOLIHULL LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP
JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 26 March 2021**

MINUTES

Present: Councillors: Chalk, R Cox, Hart, A Hodgson, S McKiernan, Newbury and People

Apologies: Councillors: Smith and Thomas

Officers: Joe Suffield – Democratic Services Officer

External Representatives: Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership
Shanaaz Carroll – Interim Director of Place
Ed Watson – Interim Chief Executive

1. APOLOGIES

No apologies were received.

2. DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY OR CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Councillor McKiernan made a declaration of interest as a trustee of South Staffordshire Mental Health Network that currently benefitted from the advice of the Growth Hub.

3. QUESTIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

No questions or deputations were received.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 29th January 2021 were presented for approval.

RESOLVED

The minutes of the meeting held on 29th January 2021 were approved.

5. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW

The Interim Chief Executive for Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP (GBSLEP) introduced the Annual Performance Report:

- The report was created as part of the funding requirements which required Government to evaluate the performance of the LEP over the previous year. This would be reported under three areas which were governance, delivery and strategic impact.
- There had been a previous concern to ensure that the LEP was diverse and represented its community. The LEP had achieved the relevant balance of diversity on the Board and a diversity champion had been appointed. Through the SME Grant, 47 grants had been provided to SME's which were run by members of the BAME communities.

**GREATER BIRMINGHAM & SOLIHULL LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP
JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 26 March 2021**

- The LEP were on track to deliver all of the Local Growth Fund, with 99% of this already committed and due to be spent by the end of March 2021. This included the additional £22m returned from the Department for Transport in November 2020, which could lead to a small run on into Quarter 1 in the next financial year. This would be managed under freedoms and flexibilities.
- They were on track to meet their 2025 targets of 14,000 homes being unlocked, 33,000 jobs being delivered and 6,700 skills interventions.
- They had been commended for the speed and scale of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. A range of intervention had taken place which were included in the report.
- The Annual Performance Review had met the relevant standard for the aforementioned three areas. The outcome of the national moderation process was ongoing, but the indications were that it had delivered what had been required.

The Chairman expressed their dissatisfaction that the Board had not been contacted prior to the Annual Performance Report being submitted given one of the areas of concern from previous APR processes was about scrutiny. The Interim Chief Executive acknowledged this point and apologised for this oversight.

A Member asked about how long the funding from the European Regional Development would be available. The Interim Chief Executive confirmed that the money would continue to cover the individual programmes which they had been allocated to support. The money was likely to last for up to the next two years.

Another Member queried the future of the LEP. The Interim Chief Executive noted that a review of LEPs had been outlined in the Budget, however they awaited the terms of reference for this. The Boundaries for the LEPs were likely to be considered in this review.

RESOLVED

The Board noted the report.

6. PLACE DELIVERY PLAN UPDATE

The Interim Director of Place for GBSLEP introduced the report and provided the following information:

- The Towns and Local Centre Framework was launched in 2019 to support areas to create thriving towns and local centres.
- GBSLEP, Black Country LEP and Coventry and Warwickshire LEP commissioned a strategic employment site study at the end of 2018. The report was delayed as a result of COVID-19, but a final draft report had been shared with Local Authority partners and was due to be published in April. Conversations remained ongoing about how to move this piece of work forward.

**GREATER BIRMINGHAM & SOLIHULL LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP
JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 26 March 2021**

- Since the first open call for funding in July 2019, there have been three calls and approximately £900,000 provided to 18 projects in the GBSLEP region. In the most recent call (November 2020), guidance was updated to include culture, the low carbon economy, heritage and COVID-19 recovery.
- A report was published in 2020 called “Growing our Towns” which provided evidence for ten locations on opportunities, assets and investment opportunities that they could take forward.
- In December 2019, a cultural action toolkit was launched. As a result, the LEP provided some capacity funding to smaller cultural organisations, but some were unable to complete their work remotely, which meant it was delayed. Another piece of work had been commissioned which looked at the role heritage could play in economic recovery and growth.
- The delivery plan has had to be adapted in light of the COVID-19 pandemic to respond to the challenges this posed. Support continued to be provided, such as through digital skills training. Practical sessions were also organised, such as for hospitality businesses before they reopened in June 2020.
- This framework helped to enable data to be collated and a closer insight into local areas which provided businesses with information to assist with bids for funding.

Members made comments and asking the following questions:

- A Member sought further information on the current condition of businesses in the LEP, and whether they were hopeful for the future. The Interim Director for Place explained that partners had been exceptionally agile during the COVID-19 pandemic. There was a general feeling of optimism, especially in the retail sector and independent sector. The hospitality sector was very cautious about how they could reopen. A focus would be how people could return to work; a piece of work had been commissioned to investigate this. The opportunities for towns and local centres could be “hub and spoke” models.
- A Member commented that the process to transform high streets would be a long process, which would take considerable time to introduce the necessary building work and other projects that were required for this shift. Another Member noted that the future high streets scheme was part of wider regeneration works, which should be seen as a positive.
- A Member asked whether there had been an evaluation on the value for money on the development of the masterplans. The Interim Director for Place confirmed that masterplans would take a while to materialise, however they would evaluate throughout, such as how the data available was being used. In response the Member highlighted that the masterplans were not accompanied with further money and asked if further support was provided to enable Towns and Local Centres to access funds. The Interim Director clarified they would provide support.

**GREATER BIRMINGHAM & SOLIHULL LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP
JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 26 March 2021**

RESOLVED

The Board noted the report.

7. LOCAL INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY - TRANSITION

The Interim Chief Executive introduced the report and provided the following comments:

- The Government had adopted a National Industrial Strategy approach under the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. This would be superseded by the Build Back Better Plan for Growth, and the responsibility for this had passed to the Treasury.
- For GBSLEP, they had worked with partners across the West Midlands to create the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS), which set out a 12 sector approach which they would promote and support as well as a number of areas where potential market opportunities could be pursued. GBSLEP was the sector lead for five sectors.
- They would continue to demonstrate to national government that the work that went into the LIS remained relevant, and that they would continue to support these sectors.

Members noted that there had been significant changes to the national strategy and were grateful for the update.

A Member requested that the LIS covered the whole of the LEP region, to ensure all Local Authorities would feel the benefit. They asked what cross border work could be done to maximise the effectiveness of the LIS. In response, the Interim Chief Executive highlighted that all areas in the LEP would be able to participate, such as through the emphasis on the Green Recovery from COVID-19. There was engagement between different regions, such as through forums such as the Midlands Engine.

RESOLVED

The Board noted the report.

8. WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Work Programme was presented to the Committee.

The Interim Chief Executive recognised the work of the Committee, and noted it would be appropriate to create a work programme for the next twelve months.

A Member asked how each respective Local Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee should scrutinise the work of the Board. This was to be determined by the Local Authority; Members offered examples of how they shared the work of the Scrutiny Committee.

Members expressed their gratitude to Officers for their support to the Board. A vote of thanks was given to Councillor McKiernan for their work as Chair.

**GREATER BIRMINGHAM & SOLIHULL LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP
JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 26 March 2021**

The next meeting was agreed to take place on 9th July at 2pm.

RESOLVED

That Officers and the Chairman to meet to discuss the items to include at future meetings. Included in this would be an induction programme for Members for the first meeting in the next municipal year.

The meeting finished at 3.00 pm