

## **LIVERPOOL CITY REGION LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP**

At a meeting of the Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership held in the on Thursday, 25th March, 2021 the following Members were

### **PRESENT:**

MR A Hamid MBE (Chairperson of the Board)  
Paul Corcoran  
Professor Dame Janet Beer  
Elaine Bowker  
Dr Jonathan Hague  
Laura Pye  
Angela White OBE  
Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram  
Councillor Wendy Simon  
Councillor Janette Williamson  
Lynn Collins  
Mark Whitworth

### **ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

Councillor Graham Morgan, Leader of Knowsley Council  
Mark Basnett, Managing Director LCR LEP  
Tony Reeves, CEX Liverpool CC  
Kirsty McLean, Director of Policy and Strategic Commissioning LCRCA  
Tony Wade, Finance Director, LCR LEP  
Frank Rogers, CEX LCRCA  
Aileen Jones, Interim Director of Strategic Delivery LCRCA  
Joanne Anderson, Innervation  
Stephen Watson, Sefton MBC  
Simon Reid, Growth Platform  
Mick Allen, BEIS  
Ellie Stanborough, BEIS

### **APOLOGIES:**

Mark Bousfield  
Kath ODwyer  
Chris Fry  
Mike Hulme

### **454. WELCOME AND DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (V)**

The Chair welcomed Ellie Stanborough to her first LEP Board.

### **455. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING (P)**

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

It was reported that since the last meeting the Digital Strategy and Action Plan had been formally approved by the LCRCA and that an update would be presented to a future LEP Board.

With regards to Net Zero it was reported that the North West has made significant progress on creating a narrative on net zero assets. Paul Corcoran advised that the LEP had joined a partnership, working on industrial decarbonisation across the city region, Greater Manchester and Cheshire.

Kirsty McLean reported that the LCRCA working with Greater Manchester, Cheshire and Warrington were playing a strong part in COP26.

It was reported that the LEP Annual Performance Review was undertaken in January and the Board were awaiting a formal response from Government. Initial feedback had suggested that Government was comfortable with the position of the LEP and how it was being governed.

A peer review with the London LEP had been organised working with Sadiq Khan and it was noted that similar challenges had been experienced by both bodies and sharing best practice relating to Growth Platform had been welcomed.

#### **456. MEMBERS UPDATE (V)**

Tony Reeves and Councillor Wendy Simon provided an update on the recent investigation into Liverpool City Council and it was agreed that further updates would be provided to the Board as the action plan progressed.

Mark Whitworth reported that recovery was underway after a period of reflection on how Peel Ports were positioned as a business in terms of aligning with the agenda of the LCR. The Board heard that there was positive growth with regards to job creation and there were currently 160 vacancies. Delivery of L2 was underway and it was reported that the Port was busy with Peel Ports considering how to better communicate about its environmental focus. It was reported that in 2020 Peel Ports had invested in electric cranes and planned to reduce its diesel fleet by 50% by the end of the year. With regards to rail capacity it was explained that this has never been so well utilised.

Laura Pye reported that the visitor economy was suffering but the roadmap was starting to open up venues. Building confidence and demand was highlighted as a key challenge in ensuring a domestic audience was available over the next 12-18 months. It was reported that a number of applications for outdoor spaces were being received and the next few weeks would be important. With regards to NML, a design competition was launched for the bridges along the waterfront to improve visitor flow and highlight the history of the docks.

Angela White reported that there had been a period of reflection for third sector organisations as the city region moved into recovery and consideration was being given as to whether workforces would continue to work remotely. It was reported that the community environment funds from the LCRCA had been well received and were a great opportunity for organisations to form innovative bids. There were concerns about what would replace ERSF and ERDF and it was agreed that the Chair investigate this with Tony Wade, Kirsty McLean and Mark Bousfield as there were a number of initiatives from central government that were unclear.

Professor Janet Beer reported that research funding had been cut and the implications of this were being considered. A funding gap resulting from Brexit was also highlighted as having detrimental implications. Frank Rogers added that the Deputy Director of BEIS had agreed to meet with the Board to discuss the needs, requirements and potential of the city region in relation to the Research and Development Strategy.

Dr Jonathan Hague advised that there were over 100 vacancies for research and development at Unilever and the company was investing more into partnerships in

the city region. An extension of Liverpool Ventures was proposed which included the systemisation of creation of mega projects and investment in an innovation exchange and consultancy apparatus which would be submitted to a future Board meeting.

Paul Corcoran reported that the pandemic had led businesses in the city region to pivot and innovate and new businesses and collaborations had been formed. Progress in gaming was highlighted as well as coding and programming. Concerning Kickstart, the Board were advised that the process was painful for businesses and there were concerns that untrained people were delivering the programme. Furthermore, there were concerns about the sustainability of careers in the programme and it was felt this needed to be explored. Innovation funding had been well received and it was proposed that how the Board looked at place assets in the city region was key. The Board was asked to consider if the necessary technical business support was available for new start ups in terms of advice and guidance on IP, funding, recruitment etc. It was suggested that a Lead Officer for digital and creative was needed. With regards to Agent, it was reported that the team was growing, and that Agent Academy continued to be successful.

The Chair suggested a roundtable discussion be held on Kickstart with Kirsty McLean and Rob Tabb to identify the opportunities and innovation needed to make it work.

Lynn Collins agreed there were concerns about Kickstart which the TUC had raised with the DWP. A year on from the start of the furlough scheme, it was reported that 11.2million people had been furloughed and 19% of all private sector were still on furlough. When coupled with the redundancy figures for the city region it was estimated that there could be 400,000 people made redundant or on furlough with 2 million people working for less than the national minimum wage. It was reported that the households below average income statistics were due to be released later in the day and they would be a realistic indicator of poverty in the region. The Chair suggested meeting with Lynn to discuss furlough, holiday pay and the forthcoming statistics.

Elaine Bowker reported on the inequalities in the city region as part of the white paper being released and noted that the return to education was going well. Testing was progressing well but there was a low take-up which hinted at students from poorer households being unable to afford to isolate. It was reported that there was demand for construction, hospitality and digital skills and that 2.5million adults were sub level 2 and this needed to be addressed. Elaine welcomed the report on race equality and advised work was underway to make the college an anti-racist organisation.

The Chair provided an update on the presentation from Myrtle Lloyd at a previous Board, noting that changes to procurement were to be announced in the coming week.

#### **457. SOUTHPORT TOWN DEAL BRIEFING (PR)**

Stephen Watson presented to the Board on the Southport Town Deal which incorporated a number of projects as part of a vision that was intended to stimulate £400million of investment in the town and create 1200 new jobs.

It was explained that the bid had been based on strengthening the visitor economy, diversifying the economy and having the infrastructure to underpin the above to address the seasonality of business in Southport.

The presentation focused on the transformation of the existing Convention Centre to a flexible event space to complement the regional offer. A water, light and sound show was also included as well as the development of a partnership between PleasureLand and an intellectual property partner with a renowned brand.

The Town Deal did not cover everything that had been submitted in the bid and so consideration was being given as to how to deliver the projects that were not included in the funding such as the Enterprise Arcade and some public realm work on Lord Street.

It was reported that the Event Centre was the centrepiece of the proposals and a £1million accelerator grant had been received in Summer 2020 that had been used for lighting Lord Street.

In summation, Stephen Watson reported that continued support with the diversification of the economy and ensuring that Southport was a part of the inward investment proposition was requested.

Paul Corcoran suggested that clarity on the types of businesses that the Enterprise Arcade would encompass would be helpful.

The Chair thanked Stephen Watson for the presentation and requested that further updates be provided to the LEP Board as progress was made on the proposals.

#### **458. RACE EQUALITY PROGRAMME - POSITIVE ACTION REVIEW (PR)**

Joanne Anderson updated the Board on the progress of the race equality review of the LEP and Growth Platform which considered the role of the LEP as leaders and facilitators as well as how they commissioned work and the demographics of the business they supported.

A review of Growth Platform's policy and procedures in relation to employment had been undertaken with a focus on the recruitment journey. Alongside this, a review of Growth Platform as a commissioner had commenced to identify any improvements that could be made.

It was highlighted that the quality of data was an issue and that the Commissioning Framework and Social Value Policy were being considered as a starting point. A desktop review of LEPs across the country had been conducted and it was reported that in terms of diversity the outcome was not positive. It was explained that although there was an appetite for change, monitoring outputs was difficult and examples of best practice were being sought.

Stakeholder engagement was due to take place on 12<sup>th</sup> April with a focus on internal staff, commissioning, board members and leadership.

Mark Basnett suggested that there was a big appetite from individuals to improve diversity but often people didn't know where to start. Members were encouraged to provide examples of good practice from their own organisations.

Paul Corcoran asked if there were quick wins that could be identified and communicated to businesses to start them on the process to better representation.

The Chair acknowledged that the Liverpool City Region LEP was considered a trailblazer for diversity and cultural change by Government but there was more to learn to encourage other businesses to make changes.

Elaine Bowker suggested that cultural change that was sustainable was more important than quick wins and that should be addressed as a priority. Supported conversations were highlighted as useful in recognising changes that needed to be made and ensuring actions were authentic and genuine. The need for race literacy when having these conversations was emphasized as key when connecting with black owned businesses and it was agreed that measuring outputs was a challenge.

The Chair suggested getting permission to share the diversity statistics of other organisations in the city region to identify best practice

Joanne Anderson reported that there were lots of will to improve and agreed that sustainable long term change was key.

#### **459. EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS ACTION PLAN (P)**

Kirsty McLean provided the Board with an update on the Employment and Skills Action Plan and thanked Asif Hamid for his interim chairing of the Employment and Skills Board.

The report set out the latest position on employment and skills and included the response to Covid-19. It was explained that the national offer was complimented by a local programme as depicted in section 4.2 of the report. It was agreed that concerns about Kickstart could be raised with DWP and DfE as part of a wider conversation on the government's response to skills and the pandemic.

The need to be clear with government on whether different programmes worked or not was acknowledged as critical to ensuring the offer fitted the needs of the businesses and people of the city region. The report identified possible gaps in support and noted that these were widening due to the pandemic.

The Board was asked for their views on how to support businesses and people in the city region and how to ensure training and skills development opportunities were linked to Covid.

Lynn Collins welcomed the report and suggested that stripping out inequality like gender segregation in job roles and the stereotypical promotion of schemes could be done as part of this work.

Elaine Bowker agreed that the LCRCA work on skills was positive and highlighted some current challenges for the Board to be cognisant of. Firstly, the lack of flexibility with the DWP in terms of programme rules and secondly access to higher education.

#### **460. FREEPORT UPDATE (V)**

It was reported that the LCRCA Freeport bid had been selected to advance to the next stage alongside seven others in England. The impact of a Freeport was expected to be significant with an £850million GVA uplift, 14,000 jobs and 310 hectares of land with commercial floor space created for future investment opportunities across the city region.

The Board heard that Government planned to direct future support for economic growth and regeneration through the Freeport. Officers were working with MHCLG and the Treasury to understand the next steps and begin detailed work on a business case. It was noted that there was widespread support from the private sector.

Simon Reid advised that the next stage was to support colleagues in the LCRCA in developing the full business case and in particular feeding in the views of industry and wider private sector. Parallel to that work, the governance arrangements were progressing with the recruitment of a Chair, HEI representation and private sector representation using the LEP and Growth Platform for that process. Consideration was being given to how local businesses could engage in terms of promotion and shaping the next stage of the process.

It was reported that officers had presented a briefing of the project to the Mersey Maritime Board and there were plans to brief other companies in the LCR to explore how the storage element of the Freeport could safeguard their operations.

The Metro Mayor acknowledged that there was a lot of hard work in the next stage and there were early indications of the types of businesses that were attracted to the Freeport.

Frank Rogers added that a key requirement of the submission was to confirm the terms and conditions of employment and how that was approached was fundamental to the LCRCA's ability to progress the Freeport.

The Chair commended officers on their work in a short space of time and the spirit of collaboration on this project. It was suggested that if the proposal could be shaped from a business and international perspective then it would be a massive opportunity for the LCRCA.

#### **461. CHAIR'S UPDATE (V)**

The Chair recorded his thanks to Chris Fry who has served his three years on the Board so would not be returning and it was agreed this be captured in a letter.

It was reported that a deputy chair for the Clean Growth Board had been identified after a strong level of interest. It was recommended that the position be offered to Melinda Acutt of ICS supported by Amanda Lyne. It was agreed that Melinda be invited to join the LEP Board as the Clean Growth representative moving forward.

As this was the last meeting of the Board before the May elections, the Chair wished the politicians luck and hoped to see them return in for the next meeting in June.

A year on from the start of lockdown, it was acknowledged that businesses had suffered in the city region and mental health and wellbeing had also been affected.

#### **462. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no other items of business.

Minutes 454 to 462 received as a correct record on the day of June 2021.

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Chairperson of the Board

(The meeting closed at 10:30am)