



Business Board: Minutes

(Draft minutes published on 15 September 2023)

Date: 4 September 2023

Time: 2:30pm – 4:30pm

Present: Al Kingsley (Chair), Andy Neely (Vice-Chair), Vic Annells, Belinda Clarke, Mike Herd, Mayor Dr Nik Johnson, Nitin Patel, Rebecca Stephens and Dr Andy Williams.

1.1 Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies for absence were received from Tina Barsby and Councillor Anna Smith.

1.2 Minutes – 10 July 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The action log was noted.

2.1 State of the Economy Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (Summer 2023)

The Business Board received the report which provided the latest evidence on the state of the local Cambridgeshire and Peterborough economy.

The Board was advised that the latest figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) had been released since the publication of this report; and those figures show how much variation there is between the national figures and the current picture in local economies. With those figures in mind, a slightly different conclusion would have been drawn in the report; with the local economy effectively recovered to a pre-covid level.

Some elements of the national picture are worth watching that are having an impact locally, including foreign direct investment. The uncertainty in numbers around jobs growth in the area is being picked up as part of the Skills Strategy but is something to consider in terms of continuing to focus on creating and supporting the creation of the right kind of jobs. There are a reasonably strong set of indicators around the closing of the productivity gap. The demand for commercial space is worth watching.

During discussion, the following points were raised by the Board:

- The gains in productivity but also in inequality are worth noting: with the widest productivity gap in Fenland. This warrants a deeper analysis especially when thinking about investment priorities. Officers confirmed this is largely driven by differences in terms of employment growth vs output. Some might be directly related to growth and employment in healthcare sector, some might be in agricultural sector: it will need sector by sector investigation.
- The Skills and Employment Committee did a deep dive into the Fenland Economy, information from that review would be helpful to be seen alongside this data and the strategic intent. The new way of working for the Business Board with representatives sitting on the Thematic Committees will help gain a collective view of the overlay of areas in line with things like transport and skills.
- Utility constraints regarding both water and energy were flagged. Officers were asked to look into how that fits into strategic planning and whether we are doing enough.
- The demand for commercial space is primarily being driven by UK companies wanting to build their first local location in Cambridge, and also

international companies looking for their first UK location. Critically this is affecting growth in Life sciences.

- The report states that the economy is unlikely to reach the target of doubling GVA over 25 years and shows six areas to be focusing on. Officers were asked to look at how the Business Board agendas can be based on those areas which focus on barriers and risks to growth rather than agendas focused primarily on how specific projects are going.
- The CPIER uses slightly different data to ONS but it would be good to have the two side by side for state of the nation work.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the latest Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Economic Update for summer 2023.

2.2 Budget and Performance Report

The Business Board received the budget and performance report which provided an analysis against the 2023/24 budgets, up to the period ending July 2023. Officers highlighted that as the time is drawing closer to the close of the Growth Works contract there is a risk that not all the vetting will be completed.

During discussion, the following points were raised by the Board:

- A query was raised regarding the amount of red in the budget report and whether there are any consequences to that. Officers confirmed that there is no risk the funds will disappear; if the money is not used the Board will be able to choose where else to spend it. Certain funding has to be spent by certain dates but a lot of money is from our own recycled funding.
- The new arrangements under the Single Assurance Framework will provide rigour around all of our investment decisions, ensuring we meet treasury standards. Along with the Investment Committee and further joined up working with constituent councils and stakeholders we will have a more defined investment process.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the financial position of the Business elements of the Economy and Growth Directorate for the financial year 23/24 to July 2023.

2.3 Business Board Chair's Update

Since taking over the role of Chair at the beginning of August, various meetings have taken place with shareholders, key officers and district council leads. A common theme of those meetings has been the changing governance and evolving role of the Business Board, with experienced and capable people supporting meetings across the Combined Authority.

Going forwards, there will be changes to the Business Board agendas to include the formalised opportunity for those Members on committees to feed back to the Board, giving wider insight into decisions and work going on.

The recruitment of a number of new members will also bring new skills and fresh ideas to help shape things going forwards.

3.1 Strategic Funds Management Review

The Business Board received the review, which provided an update on the strategic funding programmes related to the work of the Economic and Growth team, covering progress to 18 August 2023.

The following points were raised during discussion:

- There is confidence that the Start Codon Life Science Accelerator project will all be deployed.

- A more substantive report on Gainshare will be brought to the Board in January
- A decision is expected in a few weeks on the Local Industrial Decarbonisation Plan.
- For future case studies, KPIs will be included when reporting.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the updates contained within the report.

3.2 Net Zero Training Centre – Project Change Request

The Business Board received the report which outlined the initial project, the reasons for the change request and the proposed changes.

The following points were discussed and clarified:

- The project is scaled down in percentage terms but still follows the same basis as the one originally approved
- The new proposal includes funding from the Combined Authority, the College of West Anglia and Anglian Water
- Significant work has gone in to looking at other options which has led to the delay in bringing the change request forward, no other viable options were available
- Given other conversations about Fenland it feels right to put investment into the area

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Recommend that the Combined Authority Board approves the proposed project change request.

3.3 UKSPF – Skills Projects Mobilisation and Succession Planning for Skills Brokerage Services

The Business Board received a report outlining the proposals for the mobilisation of three Combined Authority wide UK SPF funded people and skills projects. It gave an overview of how the projects will align with Careers and Enterprise Company funded careers hub activities to form a future Skills brokerage offering.

During discussion of the report, the following points were raised and responded to by officers:

- Regarding TUPE and recruitment requirements, there is confidence that the target of starting on 1 October gives enough time. There are less positions going forwards than current levels but it is a natural time for people to leave.
- It is hoped that funding will be found from either external or internal resources to carry on the skills brokerage work well into the future. This will be flagged as a key priority to the new Assistant Director Skills once in post.

It was resolved unanimously to note the recommendations that were put to the Skills and Employment Committee to:

- a) Recommend that the Combined Authority Board delegates authority to the Executive Director for Economy and Growth to proceed to implement plans to mobilise UK Shared Prosperity Funds (SPF) People and Skills funded projects as outlined within the proposal.
- b) Recommend that the Combined Authority Board approves the proposal outlined within this paper to bring together the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) funded Careers Hub delivery and the UKSPF funded People and Skills projects to provide a successive service to the Growth Works with Skills Programme, and to delegate authority to the Assistant Director – Skills to proceed to engage in financial, legal and procurement activities as necessary to enact mobilisation plans.

- c) Recommend that the Combined Authority Board approve the virements across the revenue budgets within the Medium-Term Finance Plan to create the appropriate delivery budgets set out in Appendix 1.

3.4 Economic Growth Strategy Implementation Plan Update

The Business Board received a report outlining a strategic overview of progress made in delivering the Economic Growth Strategy Implementation Plan. Officers advised that outputs are now being picked up through State of the Region as well as through this process but are not included in this report. This was always designed to be quite a flexible strategy and progress is shown in many of the projects and programmes.

They confirmed that a new Economic Growth Officers Advisory Group had been set up and would be meeting the following week: with part of that group's mission also to be looking at this strategy. At strategic level some of the outputs are much longer term (for example reducing inequality) and the group will need to look at data trends over longer period of time.

The new Economy Team approved at the last meeting will drive the Economic Growth Strategy: job descriptions have been written and recruitment is to commence in the coming weeks.

When the State of the Region review comes back in January, Board will need to reflect how that fits with this work.

The following points were discussed and clarified:

- All constituent council Leaders have signed up to this strategy, there are varying degrees of involvement across the area. Officers were asked to look at including additional information to include in future reports to make it clear where different authorities are leading or supporting on different projects.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the contents of the report.

3.5 CPCA Director's Update

The Executive Director for Economy and Growth updated the Business Board on items of interest nationally and locally since the last meeting:

With the general election coming up we need to be in a real state of readiness. Preparing the ground now to ensure we have the mechanisms in place when we are asked about strategies, propositions, asks and offers.

MetroDynamics carried out an evaluation of Local Growth Funds; what projects are ongoing and will need phase 2 and 3.

For the Autumn statement we are promoting ourselves alongside the other M10 authorities, to ensure that if a core offer is made we will have an opportunity to put things forward relatively quickly. This involves a lot of work in the background to get a technical evidence base and will need Business Board member engagement moving forwards.

The interest from Government in Cambridge 2040 says a lot about Cambridge, as well as the life sciences, but we need to be on top of any issues around infrastructure constraints.

DCMS have an ongoing growth initiative and the Mayor has a meeting with the board of Creative UK.

4.1 Business Board Headlines for the Combined Authority Board

- a) The Business Board noted the headlines highlighted by the Chair, to be conveyed at the Combined Authority Board meeting on 20 September 2023.

4.2 Business Board Forward Plan

- a) Confirming that the next meeting was scheduled to be held on 13 November 2023, the Business Board noted the Forward Plan.

AOB One item of other business was raised by Vic Annells: following the Skills and Employment Committee and discussion there around the Impact Evaluation of the Adult Education Budget, he felt the Business Board should participate in that review. Officers confirmed they would take that on board.

Chair
13 November 2023