



THE BUSINESS BOARD

Business Board: Minutes

(Draft minutes published on 19 January 2024)

Date: 15 January 2024

Time: 2:30pm – 4:45pm

Present: Al Kingsley (Chair), Andy Neely (Vice-Chair), Sam Bakri, Tina Barsby, Katy Davies, Charlotte Horobin, Dr Nik Johson, Barnaby Perks, Rebecca Stephens and Dr Andy Williams.

Prior to the start of the meeting agenda, the Chair announced the recent resignation of Vic Annells; thanking him for all his contributions during his appointment. He also thanked Andy Neely and Tina Barsby for all their work with the Business Board as they would be reaching the end of their terms and not seeking reappointment.

1.1 Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies for absence were received from Mike Herd, Nitin Patel and Councillor Anna Smith. No declarations of interest were made.

1.2 Minutes – 13 November 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2023 were approved as a correct record and the action log was noted.

2.1 Combined Authority Forward Planning

The Chair asked members of the Business Board to flag any topics with officers that they feel it would be beneficial for the board to discuss or hold a specialised session around.

2.2 Business Board Chair's Update

The Chair updated the Board on important meetings that had taken place since the last Business Board meeting to broaden the accessibility of the board and strengthen its connection to local groups. These include:

- Future planning with Metro Dynamics
- Discussions around bus reform
- Talking with the Greater South East Net Zero Hub
- Understanding the journey the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) are on
- Meetings with the Oxford to Cambridge Partnership

Meetings have also taken place with a number of local businesses to connect them with local groups.

The Chair emphasised his keenness to ensure that the skills and expertise of the board members are aligned with relevant projects; asking members to consider the gaps that have now opened for members to sit on the Combined Authority's thematic committees.

A vice chair for the Business Board is also being sought.

2.3 CPCA Director's Update

The Executive Director for Economy and Growth updated the Board on items of interest national and locally since the last meeting. This included:

- With 2024 being a General Election year it is vitally important to be in a state of readiness to respond to the new Government. It is clear from the Autumn Party Conference season and subsequent policy announcements that all political parties are in support of further and deeper devolution and Combined Authorities remain a universally endorsed model to deliver that.
- Dialogue with Government Officials about the Level 4 Framework devolution opportunities continues; with the changes that have been made on the Combined Authority improvement journey being recognised as good progress, albeit Whitehall will have limited capacity to take forward further Deals with all the other existing Mayoral Combined Authorities.
- A pavilion has been secured by the Combined Authority at UKREiiF and it is key that the Business Board contributes to the development of our pitch and tour investment prospectus. The engagement of Business Board members is requested.

During discussion, Board members asked for a diary note to be sent out so that the time can be kept clear for UKREiiF. The necessity to keep awareness and where necessary alignment with other local partnerships (for example OxCam, the UK Innovation Corridor and the Eastern Powerhouse were cited) was emphasised. The OxCam partnership is also going to have a presence at the UKREiiF and some joint activities are being looked at with them.

The Mayor noted that as an elected official, he and the other local Leaders are very aware of the importance of their role in bringing democratic legitimacy and community leadership to the pitch for our areas and so had a significant and important role to play in steering and leading the whole place based system, that gives direction to other bodies and partnerships that are also active in this space.

A summary sheet with a list of local and regional organisations and bodies, who is behind them and what their objectives are, was requested from officers.

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The Chair brought agenda item 3.4 forward at officer's request

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3.4 Peterborough Station Quarter

The Business Board received a report updating them on the progress of the project and asking them for comments. They were reminded that this is a major project which presents tremendous opportunity to further the economic regeneration of Peterborough City Centre. The outline business case has been submitted to government, Business Board were asked for initial feedback and input into how economic development can be maximised.

The following points were discussed by members and responded to by officers:

- There are multiple aspects to the plans for the development: bringing more people to the city centre as well as just improving the station and moving people through and onwards. The station improvements themselves will not be enough to bring businesses to the area, the wider regeneration needs to be attractive to prospective businesses.
- Rationalising car parking is important there are much better opportunities for the land than that achieved through current parking.
- Using the project to utilise local supply chains and upskill local people would be great. Opportunities for training programmes and using local contractors for works.

- There is great spirit of cooperation from Peterborough City Council.
- Issues have been highlighted around how the project works alongside active travel. Officers are entrusted to make sure we are clear on our expectations.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) To note progress with the implementation of the Peterborough Station Quarter Project and provide comments which contribute to maximising the economic impact of the Project

2.4 Business Board Feedback from Thematic Committees

Tina Barsby reiterated the strong need for new representatives to sit on the Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee, with the current focus on Natural Cambridgeshire, local housing and the local nature recovery strategy.

Andy Williams spoke about the upcoming meeting of the Transport and Infrastructure Committee, noting that the main theme at the minute is bus reform and bus strategy. Bus reform is likely to go to consultation in the near future and it is vital that the wider business area should be responding to that. Rebecca Stephens added that EV infrastructure and the Wisbech rail project are also coming back in the near future. The Mayor reminded everyone that though there has been a lot of consultation regarding how future bus services are paid for, the wider conversations about bus services will continue for a while. Often businesses have stepped in where the bus service in an area has failed but the difficulty there is that if every business takes that approach it stops the opportunity for a bus service that works for all.

3.1 Budget and Performance

The Business Board received the report which provided an update of the financial position for 2023/24 and analysis against the 2023/24 budgets, up to the period ending November 2023.

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

- In terms of SPF spend, what is the level of confidence in the figures? Officers confirmed that data is being collected and analysed to ensure we have the final figures for claim at the end of the financial year, more detail will be reported in March. More collaborative work is being done with the local authorities to ensure we are more proactive around delivery of programmes.
- Queried around the closing window for Growth co funding, officers confirmed that the same level of scrutiny and same processes and procedures are still being applied. There is a natural lag with the claims for this funding; some of the grants being paid out were awarded 6-9 months ago.

Discussing the Business Board's formal response to the consultation, the following points were raised:

- From conversations that took place at the workshop the previous week there is broad support for the MTFP.
- There is need to maximise funds to support innovation and growth: the degree of unallocated funds gives opportunity to respond to projects that might come up. While it would be great to have more in that pot there is recognition that balancing the books overall is important. Officers confirmed that money is set aside for projects in-year and the new Investment Committee will make decisions up to £1million.
- There had been a brief conversation in terms of increasing mayoral precept but a general understanding that there is a need to see bus network improve and infrastructure will be required.

The Business Board supports the MTFP but the most important way for the board to be responsive is to ensure not all areas are allocated to soon so they can be responsive.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the financial position of the Business Division for the financial year 23/24 to November 2023.
- b) Review the consultation on the Combined Authority's Draft Corporate Strategy and Medium-Term Finance Plan and agree the Board's formal response to the consultation

3.2 Strategic Funds Management Review

The Business Board received a report on the strategic funding programmes related to the work of the Economic and Growth team, this report covers progress to 18 December 2023. Officers confirmed that a master sheet showing all the monitoring will be shared with members.

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

- Is there additional scope to engage with Innovate UK? Officers confirmed that it has been interesting to work with them and that as partners they have been happy for Combined Authority officers to be involved in the design, size and score of grants. While they want to retain control of scoring they bring officers in for the final decision. As part of the Autumn Statement the Government have referenced having a much more collaborative partnership.
- With regards to projects, officers have confirmed that visits can be arranged for projects the board has funded. A case study library can also be prepared.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the updates contained within the report

3.3 Market Towns Programme – Management Update

The Business Board received a report on the latest position in delivery of the CPCA Market Towns Programme.

The Mayor raised the need for recognition for projects that the Combined Authority has contributed to.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the latest delivery position for projects funded under the Market Towns Programme (Phase 1).
- b) Note the latest progress reporting for Market Towns Programme (Phase 2).

3.5 Sector Skills Strategy

A presentation was given to the board by the Assistant Director, Skills on progress to date. Slides can be seen [here](#).

Business Board members expressed hope that as we shape our ambitions we ensure skills is an important part of what that looks like.

Chair
15 January 2024