



THE BUSINESS BOARD

Business Board: Minutes

(Draft minutes published on 13 July 2023)

Date: 10 July 2023

Time: 2:30pm – 4:25pm

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

1.1 Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies for absence were received from Andy Neely and Tina Barsby.

Vic Annells declared a non-statutory disclosable interest in items on the agenda as the Chief Executive of the Cambridgeshire Chambers of Commerce.

1.2 Minutes – 15 May 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 May 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

- Business Board noted the Minutes Action Log with officers confirming that the target for item 21 would be updated.

2.1 Business Board Chair's Update

The Interim Vice-Chair updated the Board on the progress of the recruitment for a permanent Chair of Business Board. He confirmed that eleven applications had been received with five applicants put forward for interview. Final interviews were scheduled to take place on 27 July 2023.

He confirmed that the process for filling the other vacant places on the Business Board would commence shortly.

The Mayor voiced his feeling of reassurance that previous comments made by the Board regarding the recruitment process had been taken on board.

2.2 CPCA Director's Update

The Executive Director for Economy and Growth explained that the Chair and Director's updates have been added to the structure of the Business Board agendas going forward as an important two-way communication opportunity to capitalise on the Board's transformation into an advisory board for the Combined Authority. Opportunities will also be given to the Business Board members who have been coopted onto the Combined Authority's Thematic Committees to feed back into these meetings and pick up issues as they develop.

He updated the Board on work officers have been doing alongside officials from DLUHC, the Department for Transport and the Department of Business and Trade around deeper devolution. Moving forward, the engagement of the Business Board and its Members will be enhanced.

The Rail Summit was cited as an excellent event; bringing together public, private and voluntary community sectors to talk about the importance of rail and to raise the profile of key infrastructure across the patch. The Ministerial visit at Cambridge South station was also very successful; with the rail minister announcing government commitment to open the station by 2025.

Following the arrival of the new Chief Executive at the Combined Authority, the restructured corporate management team is now complete.

The Growth Hub evaluation report has just come out from Government and the Growth Works evaluation and review report has been circulated to Business Board members.

The Department for Business and Trade have put a call out for large capital projects as part of the UK Global Investment Summit in the Autumn. The Executive Director urged Business Board members to speak to the officers if there are any projects they can identify.

3.1 Budget and Performance Report

The Business Board received the budget and performance report which provided an overview of the revenue and capital funding lines with the Economy and Growth Directorate, to assist the Business Board and enable informed decision-making regarding the expenditure of these funds.

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

- The equity investments scheduled to be made by Growth Co before the end of the year are able to be reviewed to ensure funds are used in the right way
- Historical slippage was noted and calculated assumptions have been made for the upcoming year.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the financial year 2023/24 budget relating to the revenue and capital funding lines within the Economy and Growth Directorate.

3.2 Business Board Plan for Remaining Strategic Funds

The Business Board received a report on the remaining strategic funds, presenting a proposed spending plan on the remaining Recycled Growth Funds and Enterprise Zone (EZ) income budgets for consideration.

During discussion of the report, the Business Board:

- Sought clarification that Growth Hub funding continues until next March (confirmed by officers and if the Government confirms that this will continue into the future this will come back into funds)
- Commented that greater collaboration between the local authorities is needed, businesses don't stop at boundaries.
- Queried the statement in paragraph 5.1 "Approval of the plan put forward in this paper would allocate all the available budget for next 4 financial years, and so limit the Business Board's ability to react to events within that time horizon except where existing resources could be pivoted within committed plans." Officers confirmed that bearing in mind business board moving towards advisory capacity it is hard to ascertain what such events may be. The Government could also change the rules around LEPs. Officers pointed out that Enterprise Zone receipts go on for 19 years; so there are another 16 years from which we can draw forward if we need funds in emergency cases.
- Emphasised the need for the new Economy Team to be seen to be delivering new capacity and not just offsetting existing capacity. Officers confirmed that the workplan would be drawn around key targets, milestones and outputs.
- Reiterated that the role of the Combined Authority is a convening one; getting the best out of all the officers at all constituent levels. But that local authority officers should be enabling, supporting and advising, not delivering the work of local businesses. Officers confirmed that under the governance changes a new Economic Growth Officers Advisory Group is set up.
- After the success of the previous meeting, a further meeting was requested between the Business Board and Combined Authority Board.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Recommend the Combined Authority Board approves the proposed plan for allocating the Recycled Growth Funds and Enterprise Zone Income for 2023-24 and the following three financial years, subject to more detailed and costed business model being brought back to the Business Board.

3.3 Business Board Priority Sector Strategies

The Business Board received a report on the Priority Sector Strategies, requesting additional support to take forward plans and implement the recommendations of the sector strategies.

During discussion, the Business Board noted that with Board Members adding to the thematic committees, it is key to get the recruitment of new members right in order to regain balance on the board.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Recommend the Combined Authority Board approves the plan to create a 'New Economy Team' using £1.15m revenue of recycled Growth Funds and Enterprise Zone income.
- b) Recommend the Combined Authority Board approves the release of the £1.15m subject to completion of the workplan for the new team resources.
- c) Recommend the Combined Authority Board delegates authority to the Executive Director for Economy and Growth, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and Chief Monitoring Officer, to utilise this financial year's funds to draw up a workplan, job descriptions and begin recruitment and make appointments of required resources.

3.4 UK Shared Prosperity Fund – REPF

The Business Board received a report updating on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, specifically the addition of the Rural England Prosperity Fund Addendum agreed formally by DLUHC on 30 May 2023. They were asked to consider the report, endorse the Addendum and recommend to the Combined Authority for delegated authority to approve and implement delivery of the REPF.

During discussion, the Business Board:

- Queried whether districts need help coordinating their grants. Officers confirmed that the initial proposal for one panel to look at all the proposal bids was rejected, with the new offer for a Combined Authority officer to sit on each of the panels to support. Districts will deal with due diligence and checks themselves.
- Expressed concern that East Cambridgeshire District look to have predetermined a project to receive this funding without giving local businesses the opportunity to bid. Officers confirmed that whilst the Business Board have been asked to note that this project has been put forward this is not giving approval for the funding. The district will need to complete a change request form, and it will need to be ascertained whether the change is major or minor. A minor change can be dealt with within the Combined Authority, but a major change will need to go through DLUHC. Officers also confirmed that there are discussions taking place at officer level to see if there are other ways to support this particular project.
- Reiterated the need for the local authorities to be working together (Team Cambridgeshire). It was felt that the money could have potentially been better spent if the pot was given to the Combined Authority to decide where it was best utilised. Officers confirmed that ultimately the goal is to get to a position where there is a process and decisions can be made regarding the best use

of funding. The Government expects Combined Authorities to have a Single Assurance Framework, which the CPCA is working towards, which in the future will be used in these circumstances.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Recommend that the Combined Authority Board approves the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) Addendum, Appendix 2.
- b) Recommend that the Combined Authority Board delegates authority to Executive Director for Economy & Growth to approve in consultation with local authority partners, the Chief Finance Officer & Monitoring Officer Minor Changes as set out in Appendix 1a & 1b.
- c) Recommend that the Combined Authority Board delegates authority to Executive Director for Economy & Growth to approve the terms of Grant Funding Agreements associated with the delivery proposal (as set out in the REPF Addendum, Appendix 2) in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer & Monitoring Officer and the subsequent execution of such Grant Funding Agreements.
- d) Note the proposed projects set out in 2.1.

An additional recommendation was tabled and resolved unanimously:

- e) As the Accountable Body, recommend that the Combined Authority shall ratify all grant funding decisions made by the four District Authority panels, which shall include a Combined Authority Officer, with regards to Rural England Prosperity Funds & that all payments will be retrospectively paid by the Combined Authority to successful grant applicants on receipt of valid evidence of payments being made and checks being completed by the District Authorities.

3.5 Strategic Funds Management Review

The Business Board received a report providing an update on the strategic funding programmes that the board is responsible for, progress covered to 15 June 2023.

During discussion, the Business Board queried how the Create Growth Programme is managed and put forward, as there is concern we do not lose the opportunity for a creative focus in the area. Officers confirmed that this programme is led by universities with support of LEPs. It is a combined project delivered in cohorts, with Cambridgeshire scheduled later this year.

The Mayor confirmed that it has always been one of his mayoral priorities for there to be a cultural strategy for the whole area. This is currently not covered by the Business Board in terms of representation; encouraging people from that area to join the board will help develop a formalised cultural strategy for the area.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the updates contained within the report.

3.6 Growth Works Programme Update (Year 3, Quarter 9)

The Business Board received a report updating on the performance data for the Growth Works Programme for the reporting period to 31 April 2023.

During discussion, the Business Board queried whether with the shortfalls on ERDF and ESF, any money will have to be given back. Officers confirmed that there is no risk for the ESF as it will not be below 85%. As the ERDF is a grant scheme where we will only be drawing down precisely what will be spent, there is no risk of drawing down on something that will need to be given back.

The money spent on marketing to improve the Growth Works Programme in year two was discussed, with it confirmed that all the branding assets belong to the

Combined Authority so could continue under Team Cambridgeshire. Growth Hub is a government brand which all localities have.

The substantial amount of information included in the reporting was commented on, with it noted that it could be easy to miss important information within the large documents. Officers confirmed that the reports could be looked at in more detail at the next informal meeting.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the Growth Works Programme Performance Update to Year 3, Quarter 9 (to April 2023)

4.1 Employment and Skills Strategy Implementation Update

The Business Board received a report on the progress that has been made in taking forward the implementation of the Employment and Skills Strategy.

During discussion, the Business Board:

Queried the measures as no figures were included in the report. Officers confirmed these are released on an annual basis (November).

Inquired about maths and science education for older people and what provision we are offering. Officers confirmed that it depends on what level: we have budget for adult education (citing Multiply as an example) but we have no control over Higher Education. By working with partners the funds available are used in the most effective way.

Sought assurance on better cross-over and cross-referral going forwards. Officers confirmed that this was in hand, with a skills section in each of the sector strategies to ensure a holistic focus.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the progress of the Implementation of the Employment and Skills Strategy.

5.1 Business Board Headlines for the Combined Authority Board

The Business Board noted the headlines highlighted by the Interim Vice-Chair, to be conveyed at the Combined Authority Board meeting on 26 July 2023.

5.2 Business Board Forward Plan

Confirming that the next meeting was scheduled to be held on 4 September 2023, the Business Board noted the Forward Plan.

Chair
4 September 2023