



## THE BUSINESS BOARD

### Business Board: Minutes

(Draft minutes published on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2023)

Date: 9<sup>th</sup> January 2023

Time: 2:35pm – 4:05pm

Present: Alex Plant (Chair), Andy Neely (Vice-Chair), Vic Annells, Tina Barsby, Belinda Clarke, Mike Herd, Al Kingsley, Nitin Patel, Rebecca Stephens and Andy Williams

[Al Kingsley, Nitin Patel and Rebecca Stephens joined the meeting after the conclusion of Agenda Item 1.3 (Reappointment of First Term Private Sector Members)]

#### 119. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies for absence were received from Aamir Khalid, Councillor Lewis Herbert and Mayor Dr Nik Johnson.

#### 120. Minutes – 14<sup>th</sup> November 2022

The public minutes and the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2022 were approved as a correct record.

While discussing Minute 93 (Economic and Skills Insight Report - June 2022) of the Minutes Action Log, members were informed that an economic data insight portal was under development which would be presented to the Business Board over the next few weeks, and it was confirmed that constituent local authorities across the Combined Authority region would be consulted over the inclusion of any additional economic data that they possessed. The Business Board noted the Minutes Action Log.

#### 121. Reappointment of First Term Private Sector Members

The Business Board received a report seeking the reappointment of Al Kingsley, Nitin Patel and Rebecca Stephens, following the completion of their first three-year term of office. Faye Holland and Jason Mellad had also completed their first term, but had confirmed that they did not wish to undertake a second term.

While discussing the report, the Business Board:

- Paid tribute to Faye Holland and Jason Mellad for their contributions to the Business Board during their time as members.
- Suggested that it would be beneficial to undertake formal departure interviews with Faye Holland and Jason Mellad, and also requested that a process be established for undertaking such interviews with any future members that left the Business Board. **Action required**

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Approve second term reappointments for private sector members Nitin Patel, Rebecca Stephens and Al Kingsley; and
- b) Note the resignations of private sector members Jason Mellad and Faye Holland.

## 122. Budget and Performance Report

The Business Board received the latest budget and performance report, which provided an update and overview of the revenue and capital funding lines within the Business and Skills directorate to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022. Members were informed that the current year's allocation of LEP Core Funding that had previously been paused by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), had now been stopped and would therefore not be received.

While discussing the report, the Business Board:

- Suggested that it would be useful for future budget and performance reports to include estimates of future income from Enterprise Zone receipts. Members were informed that the Combined Authority was consulting each local authority on their plans, with various sites subject to funding bids that were being considered, and once these plans had been established, the figures in future reports would reflect updated expectations.
- Sought clarification on the risk of not receiving any expected funding, and requested that future budget and performance reports include an indication of the likelihood of funding approval being given to individual bids that had been submitted, in order to provide a wider analysis beyond guaranteed income. It was confirmed that Enterprise Zone receipts would come from the collecting authorities, despite the current delay, while the Growth Hub Grant remained paused by DLUHC while the Combined Authority's improvement plan addressing concerns raised by the external auditor continued to be implemented. The LEP Core Funding was provided on an annual basis, and it was noted that there had been no confirmation on whether it would continue for future years.
- Clarified that there was no risk of clawback due to underspend from the European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund grants, as both funds were claimed for after delivery. Members were informed that project change requests had

been submitted for both funds, and that the full allocations were expected to be spent.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the year to date financial position relating to the revenue and capital funding lines within the Business and Skills directorate for the 2022/23 fiscal year.

## 123. Strategic Funds Management Review – January 2023

The Business Board received an update on strategic funding programmes and their progress to 9<sup>th</sup> December 2022, including the Local Growth Fund (LGF) and Recycled LGF, the Getting Building Fund (GBF), the UK Community Renewal Fund (CRF), the Levelling Up Fund (LUF), the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), and the Create Growth Programme. Attention was drawn to the revised presentation of monitoring data in Appendix 1 of the report following consultation with Business Board members, while the initial analysis of evaluation work being carried out by Metro Dynamics on LGF projects was attached at Appendix 2. A proposal was under development for future decisions by the Business Board on the allocation of any recycled LGF resources to be decided in alignment with the implementation plan for the Combined Authority's Economic Growth Strategy.

While discussing the report, the Business Board:

- Sought clarification on the reasons behind slow progress being indicated for targets related to apprenticeships. Members were informed that most of the projects with high output related to apprenticeships were only now being completed, and that once they had opened, the number of apprentices would increase exponentially. It was also observed that the failed iMet project was the cause of a significant shortfall in the number of forecasted apprenticeships.
- Noted that a local company had been identified to provide technical support for the review of the Growth Works programme, and it was requested that members be provided with the terms of reference for the review. **Action required**
- Clarified that the projects included in the external evaluation of LGF projects had been selected due to the fact that they had all progressed from the building stage into delivery, and that no projects reaching such a stage had been omitted from the review.
- Argued that the revised presentation of monitoring data did not reflect suggestions made during consultations with Business Board members, and suggested that some of the data was not particularly useful unless it was cross-referenced with separate historic data that had not been included. Members were informed that the report had been published prior to the consultations, and it was emphasised that the presentation of the data was not static and would continue to evolve.
- Welcomed the proposal to align future spending with the implementation plan of the Economic Growth Strategy.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note all programme updates outlined in this paper.

## 124. University of Peterborough Phase 3 Living Lab - Full Business Case

The Business Board received a report which presented the Full Business Case for Phase 3 Living Lab of the University of Peterborough project, and which also outlined the next steps for the development of a University Programme Business Case and identifying an appropriate approach to the ongoing governance and monitoring arrangements of the university. Key changes from the Outline Business Case that had been approved in January 2022 were set out in section 2.1 of the report, and it was emphasised that despite the changes, the benefit-cost ratio (BCR) continued to indicate high value for money. Since publication of the report, the planning application for the building had been approved by Peterborough City Council.

While discussing the report, the Business Board:

- Requested an update on the development of Phase 2 of the project, particularly regarding progress in establishing its research and development (R&D) capacity. Members were informed that the Combined Authority had worked with the university to identify a stronger strategic vision in terms of delivery of R&D from the building, and that ongoing engagement with potential tenants was underway. Marketing had been carried out by Savills, a local estate agent, as well as via websites specifically relating to R&D, Opportunity Peterborough, and the wider R&D sector outside Peterborough. It was agreed to provide members with a more detailed briefing update. **Action required**
- Requested a general update on how the university was progressing, including, for example, current student numbers and application numbers for the next academic year. **Action required**
- Suggested that it would be beneficial for the Business Board to hold a meeting at the University of Peterborough and tour the facilities. **Action required**
- Queried whether there were national benchmarks with which to compare data from the University of Peterborough. It was observed that such national benchmarks were difficult to define, although it was emphasised that even a cautious projection of 50% achievement rates indicated a high BCR for the university, according to the government's guidance and benchmarks.
- Observed that the indicative progress measures set out in section 5.9 of the Full Business Case restricted the classification of 'home' undergraduate students to those with a Peterborough postcode, and suggested that a wider area should be included, for example including the whole Combined Authority region. It was also suggested that these indicative progress measures of the university's wider impact be continuously tracked and periodically reported to the Business Board, along with changes to the general perception of Peterborough, both inside and outside the city, as a result of the university.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the Full Business Case for the University of Peterborough Phase 3 Living Lab; and
- b) Note the next steps for the development of a University Programme Business Case, as set out in paragraph 2.2.5 of the report.

## 125. Skills and Labour Market Insights

The Business Board received a report providing the latest insight data on the economy, the labour market, business conditions and performance, and the skills supply, as part of an ongoing process to improve the consistency of headline data across the various Combined Authority committees and boards.

While discussing the report, the Business Board:

- Welcomed the statistics on the split of population by age across the different local authority areas that were included in the report, and suggested that it would be beneficial to also include absolute levels of population, in order to track how they changed over time. It was also suggested that future iterations of the report could present data that reflected the three functional economic geographies in the region, as well as the local authority boundaries.
- Argued that students should not be classified as economically inactive, given that the learning they were undertaking was designed to improve their economic outcomes upon completion, although it was acknowledged that the terminology and definitions were established by the government.
- Expressed concern that, according to the data in the report, none of the districts in the Combined Authority region recorded a Gross Value Added (GVA) per hour worked above the UK average. Members also expressed surprise at the data in the report indicating net migration away from both Cambridge and Peterborough. It was suggested that future iterations of the report could provide greater analysis of the statistics and data, particularly on any unexpected or unusual data, as well as recommendations on how to respond to the findings.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note and comment on the information in the report, which should be used as a guide to inform future decision making; and
- b) Suggest any additional headline insights for future reports.

## 126. Business Board Headlines for Combined Authority Board

The Business Board noted the headlines that the Chair would convey to the Combined Authority Board at its meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

## 127. Business Board Forward Plan

While discussing the Business Board's forward plan, members expressed concern about the impacts on businesses of rising levels of Covid-19 infection rates, and suggested that it would be useful to monitor the situation. Members also considered whether previous actions or funds related to the pandemic should be reinitiated, although they expressed reluctance to divert funds to projects specifically related to Covid-19, and suggested that it would be more important and effective to raise awareness and provide advice or guidance to the business community.

It was also requested that members be provided with an update on the process and timetable for the recruitment of a new Chair of the Business Board. **Action required**

Confirming that the next meeting was scheduled to be held on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2023, the Business Board noted the Forward Plan.

Chair  
13<sup>th</sup> March 2023