

Business Community Insight

To: Business Board

Meeting Date: 14 September 2021

Public report: Yes

Lead Member: Chair of the Business Board, Austen Adams

From: Director for Business & Skills, John T Hill

Key decision: No

Recommendations: The Business Board is recommended to:

Consider the two proposed options to broaden membership of the Business Board to include representation from local Business Representative Organisations and Trade Unions.

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The Business Board has been asked to consider the options set out within this report to ensure the Business Board remains truly representative of the communities and cross section of businesses it serves by including representation from local Business Representative Organisations and Trade Unions.

2. Background

- 2.1 Larger firms find it easier to release staff to participate and engage with LEP Boards and events, as the staff time involved is a much smaller proportion of their resources than for a smaller business. It will always be a challenge, therefore, to get small businesses to sit on LEP Boards and committees. It is therefore important to consider available resources for gathering evidence and business insight, and this can be achieved through good links with locally based Business Representative Organisations.
- 2.2 It is best practice for LEPs to ensure a diverse Board that draws on the representation of sectors and all parts of their geography, with representation from entrepreneurial and growing start-ups and from the voluntary and community sector bodies who will often work with and deliver services on behalf of the most vulnerable in society. The Government encourages LEPs to consider how to reflect different sectors of the local community through Sub-Boards. Furthermore, this ensures that LEP Boards continue to attract and retain the required expertise to better represent the key sectors and wider business community.
- 2.3 The Business Advisory Panel (BAP) is the current Sub-Board, which was set up by the Business Board as an opportunity to feed in the views of the wider business community, through connectivity with the local chapters of national business organisations, such as the Federation of Small Businesses, Institute of Directors, Confederation of British Industry and Chambers of Commerce, as well as placed based organisations, like Opportunity Peterborough and Cambridge Ahead. The initial meetings were relatively successful, although the Business Board were keen to develop the BAP's role and interface into Business Board meetings over the course of 2020. However, due to Covid-19, meetings were suspended in February 2020 on the basis that the BAP role was subsumed into the operations of the local Economic Recovery Sub-Group (ERSG).
- 2.4 Members are reminded that in May 2021, the Business Board supported a reconfiguration of the BAP to replicate the more dynamic and powerful role the ERSG has been able to deliver during Covid-19. It was agreed that as the LEP landscape evolves, it was sensible for the Business Board to maintain strong relationships with all its stakeholders, including changes to ensure the BAP remains an effective mechanism and bolsters the Business Board's ability to provide coordinated responses to the Government on behalf of the whole area.
- 2.5 Whilst the ERSG has been instrumental in connecting partners into a regular forum to collaboratively co-create an Economic Recovery Strategy for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, there is a need to review its role as Covid-19 restrictions are removed and the economy continues to fully open. On this basis, it makes little sense to continue with both Sub-Groups, and it is therefore proposed that the ERSG is wound down and replaced by the newly reconfigured BAP to assume lead role in support of the Business Board.

2.6 Finally, the Trade Union Congress (TUC), through its network of over 54 affiliated Unions, has recently raised with the Government concerns at the nature of the make-up of LEP boards, that can often have too narrow a focus on partnerships between business representatives and local authority leaders, which leads to the exclusion of other important social, economic and environmental partners (SEEPS), including Trade Unions. These partners are keen to ensure that representatives on LEP boards are genuinely representative and can speak on behalf of the diversity of business interests across a LEP area. There is a noticeable lack of consistency with the LEP landscape offering a very mixed picture on how this is being addressed by the LEP network. The local affiliated network of Unions believes that there is need for greater clarity about the process for appointment to the board of LEPs, and the need to facilitate more effective engagement with Trade Unions and is something that should be explored and considered by the Business Board.

3. Options available to the Business Board

3.1 To ensure the Business Board continues to remain truly representative of the communities which it serves and to strengthen business insight, members are asked to consider the following options.

3.1.1 Option 1 - To further strengthen links with Business Representative Organisations:

- *Recruiting a local Business Representative Organisation representative to chair the BAP Sub-Group as a voting member on the Business Board.*

This would help to bring in additional economic insight and input through closer links with the recently incepted self-organised cooperative group of Business Representation Organisations under the leadership of Cambridgeshire Chambers of Commerce. This representative would be agreed with both the BAP and the Business Board.

3.1.2 Option 2 – To strengthen links with Trade Union organisations:

- *Recruiting a local Trade Union representative as a voting member on to the Business Board.*

This could be achieved by recruiting a local Trade Union representative as a voting member on to the Business Board, to feed-in perspectives and insight from the local community of Trade Unions. In a similar approach to our local Business Representation Organisation communities, this could involve exploring the potential of local affiliations of Trade Unions forming into a self-organised local group to share insight and issues, and electing a chair to be put forward as a candidate for one of the three vacant Business Board positions.

3.2 The Business Board is being asked to give consideration to the above options on the proposed expansion in membership representation. Subject to the Business Board's position, CPCA officers will undertake further governance and legal review, and follow-up with the Business Board to seek approval prior to any changes being implemented.

Significant Implications

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The options have no net financial impact as they identify options to fill vacant positions on the Business Board for which allowances are already budgeted.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Local Assurance Framework would be revised accordingly to reflect any future changes, subject to Combined Authority Board approval.

6. Other Significant Implications

- 6.1 None.

7. Appendices

- 7.1 None.

8. Background Papers

- 8.1 [National Assurance Framework](#)

- 8.2 [CPCA Constitution](#)

- 8.3 [Business Advisory Panel Report – 19 May 2021 – Item 3.5](#)

- 8.4 [Business Board Recruitment paper – 19 July 2021 – Item 3.4](#)