



## THE BUSINESS BOARD

### Business Board: Minutes

Date: 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Time: 2:30pm – 5.15pm

Present: Austen Adams (Chair), Andy Neely (Vice-Chair), Tina Barsby, Councillor Wayne Fitzgerald, Mike Herd, Faye Holland, Mayor Dr Nik Johnson, Aamir Khalid, Al Kingsley, Nitin Patel, Rebecca Stephens and Andy Williams

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

Apologies for absence were received from Jason Mellad. Apologies for lateness were received from Mayor Dr Nik Johnson.

Faye Holland declared a non-statutory disclosable interest in relation to the High Performance Computing Study and Roadmap (agenda item 3.3), due to her involvement with the production of the report. It was confirmed that she would not be required to leave the meeting for the duration of the item.

The presence of the Business Board's Section 73 Officer was noted.

#### 20. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 19<sup>th</sup> May and 9<sup>th</sup> June 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2021 were approved as a correct record, subject to the addition of Mike Herd and Dr Andy Williams to the list of members present at the meeting.

The minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2021 were also approved as a correct record.

While discussing the updates of the Minutes Action Log, members requested that further information be included detailing the responsible officer and expected completion date of outstanding actions.

#### 21. 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, and which also sought a recommendation for the Combined Authority Board to approve a reprofiling of the Local Growth Fund (LGF) budget. The Finance Manager confirmed that members' requests to make the reports more

interactive and presented differently had been fulfilled, and asked members for further input.

While discussing the report, the Business Board:

- Noted the changes to the presentation of the financial reports and thanked officers for accommodating their requests.
- Noted that the Market Towns Budget for 2021 was under development.
- Suggested that basing budget reports on a contractual forecast might give the impression of an underspend. It was explained that as the year progressed any savings would be presented to the Business Board in a budget reprofiling report, to ensure that allocated funds were spent within the required timeframe. It was agreed that future finance reports would be based on the contractually committed spend rather than relying on a forecast.
- Noted that the income from the sale of the iMET building would be reintegrated to the Capital Budget.
- Requested a timeline be identified for the potential exit plans of each equity investment project, and for the findings to be presented to the Business Board for discussion. **Action required**
- Sought clarification on the sustainability of the levels of funding available for ongoing investments and how longer-term support would be provided. The Finance Manager advised that funding would come from different sources and collaboration would be needed with other local authorities to submit bids for higher levels of funding.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- (a) Note the outturn financial position relating to the revenue and capital funding lines within the Business & Skills Directorate for the 20/21 financial year;
- (b) Approve the format for the presentation of revenue, capital and income funding lines within the Business & Skills Directorate for the 21/22 financial year; and
- (c) Recommend the Combined Authority Board approve the reprofiling of the Local Growth Fund Programme Costs Budget for 2021-22.

## 22. Strategic Funds Management Review July 2021

The Business Board received the July iteration of the Strategic Funds Management Review, which provided an update on strategic funding programmes and which also detailed a project change request received from Cambridgeshire County Council in relation to the Wisbech Access Strategy project. The Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) advised, that confirmation of the successful Community Renewal Fund (CRF) projects was expected in early August and an additional eight areas were identified to carry forward after a review of the CRF process. Further guidance was expected from the Government announcement that would confirm the amount of spending room and the

eligibility criteria for the UK Shared Prosperity Funding for the next four years. The SRO highlighted that bids worth £350m had already been received, however it was expected that only £90-100m would be provided by the Government over the next four years.

The SRO summarised the main points of the change request submitted by the County Council, the impacts, and the options available to the Business Board, noting that the project had missed the 31st March 2021 deadline for completion and had, via a previous change request, reduced the number of junctions to be delivered due to escalating costs. There would be a loss if the request, to approve a further £1.8m spend of the currently allocated budget to get the project shelf-ready, were not approved as the work to-date would be lost. Additional funding sources had not yet been identified to move the project out of a dormant state even if the change request were approved. Members were advised that the clawback process would enable the repatriation of a minimum £2m if approved and up to £3.9m if rejected.

While discussing the report and the change request, the Business Board:

- Requested a prioritised list detailing the possible pipeline projects. **Action required**
- Requested the creation of a clear eligibility criteria that would:
  - Include a scoring matrix to enable prioritising and the easy assessment of the bids;
  - Require alignment with the Local Industrial Strategy;
  - Manage the expectations of bidding parties; and
  - Include guidance on the expectations of job creation in monitoring reports.**Action required**
- Noted that the Wisbech Access project had already failed twice and questioned whether it was still relevant and represented value for money.
- Sought clarification on whether the number of junctions could be decreased, thus making the currently allocated level of funding sufficient. The SRO confirmed that the reduction in the number of junctions was not viable due to their interlinked nature.
- Expressed concern over the precedent that agreeing to the change request would set, given that the original funding had been approved three years ago and no progress had been achieved.
- Noted that the project would not be able to remain 'shelf-ready' for very long without further funding.
- Suggested that if the clawback process was implemented, the recovered funds could be channelled into the LGF and recycled into meaningful projects in the Wisbech area.

- Requested a review of the project to identify learning outcomes which would ensure that future projects did not stay dormant. Action required

It was resolved unanimously to:

- (a) Reject the Project Change Request for the Wisbech Access Strategy Project and recommend that decision to the Combined Authority Board; and
- (b) Note and recommend all other programme updates outlined in this paper to the Combined Authority Board.

## 23. Covid-19 Impact Assessment Report

The Business Board received a report assessing the impacts of Covid-19, in advance of a full refresh of the Local Economic Recovery Strategy (LERS) which would provide 6-monthly updates on the impacts. The report highlighted that a gradual recovery was underway, however workforce shortages were still impacting businesses. Unemployment had increased, exacerbating inequality, and it was emphasised that further flexibility would be needed to overcome these issues.

While discussing the report, the Business Board:

- Noted that it was hard to distinguish the causes of workforce shortages in agricultural businesses between the impacts of withdrawal from the European Union and Covid-19, and argued that in the medium-term businesses could be expected to invest in automation rather than relocating overseas.
- Noted that the localised impact of Covid would be investigated.
- Noted that the impact on housing would be included in a future report.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the Covid-19 Impact Assessment Report.

## 24. Business Board Annual Report and Delivery Plan 2021

The Business Board received its Annual Report for 2020-21 and Annual Delivery Plan for 2021-22. The Board was advised that the outcomes and positive changes would be highlighted, and the report would be submitted to the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy.

While discussing the report, the Business Board:

- Expressed a view that the report should not be available as a hard copy but should be accessible online.
- Suggested that the LGF, the Local Economic Recovery Strategy(LERS) and the Business Board dashboards could be more aligned to show continuity. It was also

suggested that co-branding could demonstrate the track record and could be attached to future bids to showcase previous achievements.

- Requested that officers provide a narrative to the report tables when these did not reflect actual numbers.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- (a) Approve the Business Board's Annual Report (2020-21) and Annual Delivery Plan (2021-22);
- (b) Recommend the Combined Authority Board approves the Business Board's Annual Report (2020-21) and Annual Delivery Plan (2021-22), and approves submission of both documents to the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS); and
- (c) Recommend the Combined Authority Board approve a new budget of £15k to implement design work to develop and produce a publishable version of the Annual Report and Delivery Plan, and digital platform, to better communicate and showcase achievements of the Business Board, to be funded from Enterprise Zones Reserve Fund.

## 25. High Performance Computing Study and Roadmap

The Business Board received a report which presented the scope of the opportunity related to High Performance Computing capability and to seek a recommendation to the Combined Authority Board to fund a feasibility study to understand and produce a roadmap that framed routes to benefit from this capability and outlined core actions to deliver on one of the key recommendations in the Digital Priority Sector Strategy.

While discussing the report, the Business Board:

- Argued that support for smaller companies to access supercomputing would be key.
- Noted that this project would support the UK Government's ambition to become a global scientific superpower.
- Acknowledged that the project was in an 'embryonic' state and further steps would need to be taken to build it up. These would include a call for private and public funding and could receive national support.
- Noted that the quotes received throughout the tender to carry out the necessary research varied in quality and price range, and suggested that the University of Cambridge could be contacted to share their opinion. **Action required**

It was resolved unanimously to:

- (a) Approve the commissioning of a feasibility study for the High Performance Computing and Artificial Intelligence capability to support the Digital cluster development; and

- (b) Recommend the Combined Authority Board approve £46,000 Enterprise Zone Reserve funding to commission the development of a feasibility study for the High Performance Computing and Artificial Intelligence capability to support the Digital cluster development across Greater Cambridge and wider Combined Authority area.

## 26. Business Board Performance Assessment Framework and Recruitment Process

The Business Board received a report which presented the proposed performance assessment framework for the evaluation of the function of both the Business Board and its individual private sector members, and which outlined the recruitment process for current and future vacancies on the Business Board.

While discussing the report, the Business Board:

- Noted the resignation of Kelly Swingler and Nicki Mawby and requested that their feedback be reviewed to complete evaluation and identify learning outcomes.
- Requested the development of the member recruitment process. **Action Required**
- Expressed concern over the suggestion that a member from one of the trade unions could be invited as a new member, bringing attention to possible conflicts of interest. It was highlighted that the Business Board had been established to represent the business community in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and members supported the suggestion that a wider range of expertise should be chosen from the business community. It was agreed that the aims and objectives of the Business Board would be reviewed, and that the pros and cons of inviting a trade union member would be considered alongside co-option, and reported back to the Business Board. **Action required**
- Supported the Board review and agreed that a wider range of quotes should be received for the evaluation. **Action required**

It was resolved unanimously to:

- (a) Approve the proposed Performance Assessment Framework for the evaluation of the Business Board and individual private sector members;
- (b) Recommend the Combined Authority approve the use of Enterprise Zones Reserve Fund to fund the evaluation of the Business Board and individual private sector members to a maximum budget cap of £35k (plus VAT);
- (c) Note the resignation of both Kelly Swingler and Nicki Mawby as Business Board members; and
- (d) Agree the process and timetable for the recruitment of Business Board members from August 2021 following Board approval.

## 27. Business Board Nomination to the Greater Cambridge Partnership Joint Assembly

The Business Board received a report proposing a nomination to the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) Joint Assembly and requesting the Business Board to consider the remaining two positions for its representatives on the Joint Assembly.

While discussing the report, the Business Board:

- Expressed support for the proposed nomination.
- Confirmed that the representatives on the GCP were representing the business community and they were appointed by the Business Board.
- Agreed that connectivity should be increased between the Business Board and its representatives on the GCP.
- Requested that a review of current arrangement be taken in 6 months. **Action required**

It was resolved unanimously to:

- (a) Nominate Claire Ruskin (Executive Director, Cambridge Network Ltd) to represent the Business Board on the Greater Cambridge Partnership Joint Assembly;
- (b) Agree that the two current representatives, Christopher Walkinshaw (Marshalls of Cambridge) and Heather Richards (Verint), should continue to sit on the Greater Cambridge Partnership Joint Assembly.

## 28. Business Board Expenses and Allowances Scheme

The Business Board received a report on the remuneration and expenses paid to private sector members for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 under the Business Board Expenses and Allowances Scheme, and which also proposed an amendment to the Scheme to include the option for members to formally forgo remuneration payments.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- (a) Note the summary of remuneration and expenses paid to members during 2020-21 under the Business Board Expenses and Allowances Scheme; and
- (b) Recommend the Combined Authority approve an amendment to be made to the Business Board Expenses and Allowances Scheme to include the option for members to forgo remuneration payments.

## 29. Employment and Skills Strategy

The Business Board received a report detailing the proposed approach for the development of a refresh of the current Skills Strategy which had been approved by the Combined Authority Board at its meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

While discussing the report, the Business Board:

- Noted that the engagement sessions had been well thought-out and presented.
- Suggested that voluntary work should be included as part of the strategy.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the approved approach to the development of the new Employment and Skills Strategy.

## 30. Business and Market Engagement Update

The Business Board received a report which provided an update on planned, ongoing and past communications activity related to the Business Board.

While discussing the report, the Business Board:

- Noted the changes implemented in the way reports would be presented to increase agility, thus enabling the Forward Plan to become more accurate and timely.
- Noted the future availability of a digital dashboard and requested an access link.  
**Action required**
- Requested that a notification be sent to members before press releases took place.  
**Action required**

It was resolved unanimously to:

- (a) Note the update on recent Business and Market Engagement activity;
- (b) Note the forward plan of communications activity for the Business Board; and
- (c) Agree to receive future updates on communications activity via a bespoke digital reporting dashboard and forward plan, provided via the Communication team's media monitoring software.

## 31. Business Board Headlines for Combined Authority Board

The Business Board noted the headlines that the Chairman would convey at the Combined Authority Board meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2021.

## 32. Business Board Forward Plan

Whilst noting the Forward Plan, members requested that the actions be mapped onto the Forward Plan where applicable to aid tracking of actions. **Action required**

Chair  
14<sup>th</sup> September 2021