

LEP - Business Support Management Board

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday, 25th May, 2016 at 12.00 pm
at the Former County Mess - The John of Gaunt Room, County Hall,
Preston**

Present

Michael Blackburn
Timothy Webber

In Attendance

Andy Walker

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Chair welcomed members and apologies were noted from Michael Damms, and Gary Lovatt. In addition, Danny Davies attended in place of Councillor Frank McKenna and Alan Welsh in place of Barbara Murphy.

Chair also welcomed Steven Cochrane from Regenerate Pennine Lancashire and Craig Hines from Propel attending to present information to the Board under items 6 and 7.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest noted at this time.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 21st March 2016

Resolved: The Board agreed to defer the approval of the minutes from the last meeting due to majority of the members at that meeting not in attendance at this meeting.

4. Matters Arising

Matters arising covered in the agenda.

5. Terms of Reference

The Board were presented with an update of changes to the Terms of Reference for the Board which were agreed by the LEP Board on the 5th April 2016.

Resolved: The Board:

1. Noted the revised Terms of Reference.
2. To identify potential representatives from HEI's and Business Finance to attend the Board to bring back to the next meeting.
3. To identify whether the link to the ESIF Committee and Skills Board needs to be added to the terms of reference.

6. Final Report - Business Support Simplification

A condition of the interim grant support from BIS in 2015/16 was that each LEP/Growth Hub should conduct a Business Support Simplification Audit within its area, in an attempt to develop a more simple landscape where businesses could easily understand what was available at their location.

The Board has received reports on the development of this exercise/document and now moving to submit conclusions to BIS.

Steven Cochrane from Regenerate Pennine Lancashire was welcomed to the meeting to discuss the findings and recommendations from the draft report circulated with the agenda. A number of areas was highlighted to the Board which included:

- Access to growth finance has shown to be a key issue due to a confusing mix of grant and loan offers. One of the recommendations would be the alignment of funding streams to assist with this.
- There are gaps in support such as no generic start up offer for individuals over the maximum age and whose business idea is not projected to have high growth potential. In addition there is limited support to retail sector.
- Many respondents had not accessed any support. There was a need to ensure effective marketing to engage and also a need to question whether sufficient demand is there.
- There was a gap identified for a local independent innovation and technology support offer.
- It was evident that more appropriate and regular feedback was required and looking to devise a Trip Advisor style rating system to support this.
- There is a need to maintain and keep up to date information on the business support landscape.
- More funding through results based payments required to give a greater link to performance monitoring and effective evaluation of projects which could be built into all contracts.
- Effective coordination required between national and local products.

Members were invited to comment on the draft report (detailed below)

It was confirmed that in relation to the unified approach to funding, this is currently under review and looking at more holistic approach to policy.

In relation to an innovation plan, it was reported that there were plans in place to convene a steering group around this. In addition, it was reported that BAE are actively supporting and identifying need. It was agreed there is a need to link to the private sector as well as universities.

The Board acknowledged the need to understand the local authority grants around how active they are and whether they should focus on areas where support is not provided to work more closely with Growth Hub.

The Board agreed that the recommendations resolved some of the issues around duplication and gaps in support but further work was required.

The Board agreed that there is a need for an innovation plan aligned to the four key sectors – manufacturing, digital, healthcare and energy which are supported by transport, skills and professional services.

The concern around support to retail was highlighted particularly around the connection with town centre regeneration. In addition it was highlighted that some tourism businesses were not eligible which also has an impact. Although it was argued that by growing business areas, it could have a positive impact on retailers. It was felt that there could be the potential for the local authority funding to be targeted to support regeneration in town centres to attract businesses and therefore promote a positive impact to the retail sector.

Resolved: The Board:

1. Noted the report.
2. Approved its submission to BIS.
3. To seek information on whether there is a single coherent Lancashire based plan for town centres which includes transport.

7. European Funded Business Support Projects - Update/Overview

Andy Walker provided information to the Board on Boost and the wider business support offer through the diagram provided with the agenda which included:

- Chorley Digital Office Park –a regeneration project.
- U-Start, Princes Trust Better off in Business and Enterprise Support - have received application approval.
- There were a number of university projects and unsure at this time if they would fully materialise.

Andy reported to the Board that in relation to the financial and outputs position, the thematic objective TO3 (SME) is nearly fully committed but there is the potential to transfer funding from other priorities if required. TO1 Innovation was reported to have a significant amount of funding still available and awaiting the larger projects coming forward.

The Board were informed that there is a signed commitment for projects which have completed the application process but those for those still in pipeline, there could be a risk depending on the outcome of the EU referendum.

Craig Hines was welcomed to the meeting to discuss Propel (a presentation has been appended to these minutes for information).

The presentation outlined the overview of the support offer, who it is aimed at, the journey and the outputs which included:

- Account management throughout process
- Continuous monitoring and evaluation
- Work with fewer companies but at a higher level
- Support to 499 businesses over the next three years

Members were invited to comment on the information provided (detailed below).

Marketing and leadership/management were the top two areas for support. It was also highlighted that business needs could also be very sector specialist.

Eligibility was reported to be very restrictive (B2B only) and there is currently nowhere to signpost businesses to if not eligible.

It was reported that Peer to Peer networking has proved to be very popular (business to business support) to assist with growth.

8. Lancashire Growth Hub 2015-16

In 2015, the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) made a revenue grant to each of the 39 emerging Growth Hubs in England. This payment was aligned with but not part of the Growth Deal. As a condition of this funding, BIS requested that an Annual Report be prepared and signed off by the LEP before submission.

BIS have made a further offer of revenue grant for 2016/17 and 2017/18 and similar reporting requirements will be in place to account for the use of this resource. Given that BIS have developed a standard template for the submission of data, we should then be able to compare performance across hubs.

Andy Walker provided an outline to the Board on the report circulated with the agenda. The Board commented that they were eager to look at the comparison of performance across the hubs

The deadline for submission was reported to be in the next two weeks.

Resolved: The Board:

1. Noted the report.
2. Approved its submission to BIS.

9. Growth Deal 3

Andy Walker provided a verbal update on the 3rd round of the Growth Deal due to end June/July. The proforma has been circulated to those who have previously engaged with Growth Deal. This round was reported to be capital led (i.e. housing projects).

Resolved: Paper from the June LEP Board to be circulated to the Board.

10. Reporting to Lancashire Enterprise Partnership Board

Resolved: The Board confirmed the following to go to the LEP Board:

1. BIS report submission.
2. Link Lancashire Strategy to the four sectors.
3. Understanding activity around town centres.
4. Place based plan to support and encourage business development.
5. Connecting silos.

11. Any Other Business

None.

12. Date of Next Meeting

Next meeting to be held on the 30th August 2016 at 2pm. Cabinet Room B, County Hall, Preston.

Resolved: The Board requested a check to identify if this meeting date would need changing.