

# GREATER BRIGHTON ECONOMIC BOARD

10.00am 26 JANUARY 2021

## VIRTUAL MEETING

### MINUTES

**Present:** Councillors Humphreys (Chair) Ash-Edwards, Boggis, Lamb, Nicholson, Mac Cafferty, Platts and Walsh

**Business Partners:** Trevor Beattie, Andrew Green, Prof Debra Humphris, Clare Mason, Dean Orgill, Andrew Swayne, Prof Adam Tickell, Caroline Wood

### PART ONE

#### 17 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

##### 17a Declarations of substitutes

17.1 Councillor Boggis was present as substitute for Councillor Parkin.

##### 17b Declarations of interests

17.2 Andrew Swayne declared a non-pecuniary interest as Chairman as Ricardo as one of their workstreams was referenced on the agenda.

##### 17c Exclusion of the press and public

17.3 In accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 ("the Act"), the Board considered whether the public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any item of business on the grounds that it is likely in view of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during it, there would be disclosure to them of confidential information as defined in Section 100A (3) of the Act.

17.4 **RESOLVED-** That the press and public not be excluded.

#### 18 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

18.1 **RESOLVED-** That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 October 2020 be approved and signed as the correct record.

#### 19 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

19.1 The Chair provided the following communications:

“I would like to welcome Claudia Raistrick to her first Board meeting. Claudia is the new Business Manager joining Andy on the Greater Brighton Support Team and started her new role only yesterday. In addition to Claudia, Amber Sheppard will be starting as Programme Support Officer at the start of next month, so the Support Team will be at full strength as we head into this year.

Congratulations to Lewes District Council who have secured just over £5million of in principle funding from the Future High Streets Fund to help re-imagine Newhaven town centre – as was presented to this Board last spring. It is a little bit less than their bid, but I understand that the Newhaven submission was one of the strongest in the country and is a fantastic achievement. Colleagues at Lewes will now be revising their bid in-line with the funding award and I look forward to seeing work start later this year.

On 31 December the UK left the European Union with an agreed Trade Deal. Whilst this provides businesses with some certainty around the new trading environment, there is still a need to provide businesses support so that they can understand and adapt to the new regulations. Greater Brighton Partners are working hard to support business through this transition.

Last week the Communities Secretary announced that the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the £4bn levelling up fund - both intended to replace current EU funding - will have “localism and local government at their heart”, and that prospectuses for the levelling up fund will be published within weeks. We are pleased that Government are moving to replace the EU funding streams, and that Government are looking to work with regions and local authorities. We look forward to working with Government to make the strongest possible case for investment in our region, and to ensure the correct interventions are made to address the local challenges that we have.

Following the publication of their transport strategy, Transport for the South East (TfSE) are embarking on a programme of five area studies.

Each area study focuses on a designated transport corridor, linking major economic hubs and international gateways. One of the studies focuses on the south-central strip of our the TfSE area, which covers the Greater Brighton City Region. The South Central Area Study Forum has been established to inform this work and will first meet next month. As a key regional stakeholder, the Board will be represented on the Forum, and we look forward to working with TfSE and regional colleagues to identify interventions for inclusion within TfSE’s forthcoming Strategic Investment Plan.

Last week the Government published “Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth”. The White Paper sets out how Government intends to reform further education, with the main aims being increasing productivity, supporting growth industries, and giving individuals opportunities to progress in their careers. The Paper states that reforms will put employers at the heart of the system so that education and training leads to jobs that can improve productivity and fill skills gaps. There is also a clear intention from Government to invest in higher-level technical qualifications that provide a valuable alternative to a university degree. We will examine the paper in more detail to understand the opportunities it presents for our City Region and look forward to more information from Government over the coming months”.

## **20 GREATER BRIGHTON SUSTAINABLE RECOVERY PLAN UPDATE**

- 20.1 The Board considered a report of the Chair, Greater Brighton Officer Programme Board that provided a progress update on the COVID-19 Recovery Sustainable Recovery Plan.

20.2 Councillor Walsh noted the importance of hydrogen to future energy needs and roll out of full fibre. Councillor Walsh noted that the Arun Valley Line was not mentioned in the report.

20.3 The Chair stated that the document could be reviewed for any omissions.

**20.4 RESOLVED-**

- 1) That the Board note the information in the report, including the update on the pandemic, and progress made against the plan agreed in October 2020.
- 2) That the Board agrees with the suggested actions for the next quarter (February-April 2021), and that progress be reported back at the April Board meeting.

**21 MAXIMISING THE REGIONAL INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM**

21.1 The Board considered a report of the Chair, Greater Brighton Officer Programme Board that proposed beginning the process of the development of a transformational innovation zone by coalescing the Greater Brighton City Region's innovation excellence, knowledge economy and place-making assets to meet the economic challenges of the next ten years.

**21.2 RESOLVED-**

- 1) That the Board agree to set up a working group, with agreed Terms of Reference, to investigate the development and establishment of a Greater Brighton Innovation zone (February 2021).
- 2) That the Board agree that the working group should investigate the relationship between infrastructure activity and the Innovation Region proposition (March – June 21).
- 3) That the Board agree that the working group should report back to the July/October 2021 Greater Brighton Economic Board on the initial findings of the Working Group.

**22 GREATER BRIGHTON INWARD INVESTMENT DESK**

22.1 The Board considered a report of the Chair, Greater Brighton Officer Programme Board that sought approval for the establishment of an dedicated inward investment resource as recommended by the Board's Inward Investment Strategy.

22.2 Councillor Mac Cafferty stated that the pandemic would present the region with multiple challenges and expressed his support of the proposals that represented opportunity for the region to become an economic hub in its own right.

22.3 Clare Mason stated that C2C supported the initiative that could help boost export opportunity for regional SME's.

22.4 Councillor Lamb stated that the region did need inward investment however, there was currently a lack of oversight on resource allocation in the Greater Brighton region and that needed to be clarified to ensure investment was spent wisely and proportionally.

- 22.5 Nick Hibberd stated that detailed information providing oversight on the Greater Brighton budget and how it was spent could certainly be provided and would be included in the annual report going forward. Nick Hibberd clarified that grants would first be sought for the projects identified and if that was not possible, contributions from Board members would be sought where it could be demonstrated that contribution would benefit the rebuilding of the local economy.
- 22.6 Councillor Ash-Edwards stated that it was important to focus on the added value working together could bring and that it was key to draw down any private investment possible and a focussed approach would achieve best outcomes.
- 22.7 Councillor Nicholson stated that there was an opportunity to re-think approaches to inward investment toward a system that created equality. Councillor Nicholson added that the public sector needed to be the anchor spend, seeking to build SME's and social enterprise whilst protecting those most vulnerable.
- 22.8 Dean Orgill stated that investment was critical to boosting trade and an ambitious approach would in turn help boost the regional supply chain.
- 22.9 Councillor Nicholson proposed that the wording of recommendation 2.2 be amended to reflect the emphasis in region on a cleaner environment and carbon reduction and the importance of the economic recovery from the pandemic.
- 22.10 Following the Board agreed that the wording of recommendation 2.2 be amended to:
- That the Board agrees first hire should be focussed on identifying new opportunities from London-based companies rethinking their footprints post-COVID. The research support would help to identify potential foreign targets that should be engaged and should focus on cleaner and greener aspirations and Covid recovery.*
- 22.11 Councillor Lamb stated that his concerns about accountability remained and Crawley would not be contributing without reassurance and clarity.
- 22.12 **RESOLVED-**
- 1) That the Board agrees to the establishment and resourcing of an inward investment desk consisting as a minimum of two business managers and one researcher supported by additional communications and intelligence resources.
  - 2) That the Board agrees first hire should be focussed on identifying new opportunities from London-based companies rethinking their footprints post-COVID. The research support would help to identify potential foreign targets that should be engaged and should focus on cleaner and greener aspirations and Covid recovery.
  - 3) That the Board seeks to work with Coast to Capital LEP on the development of a bid to DiT's High Potential Opportunities programme, with partners agreeing on a collaborative approach to identify what the niche sector is that HPO should focus on and the support required to promote it.

- 4) That the Board agrees that initial cost of resourcing the desk should possibly be underwritten by local authorities, with funding sought from other sources including Government incentives and private sector contributions.

**23 GREATER BRIGHTON HYDROGEN GROUP**

23.1 The Board considered a report of the Chair, Greater Brighton Officer Programme Board that provided an update on the progress of the Greater Brighton Hydrogen Group, a planned launch and future work towards developing a hydrogen economy and supply chain in the Greater Brighton and wider Sussex area.

23.2 Board Members welcomed the report as an important step forward.

**23.3 RESOLVED-**

- 1) That the Board note the progress of and wide interest in the Greater Brighton Hydrogen Group, and its launch event planned for February 2021.
- 2) That the Board support the research into future demand for hydrogen in transport being carried out by the University of Brighton, Ricardo and Greater South East Energy Hub.
- 3) That the Board note and support the group in responding to opportunities for funding bids on hydrogen which are expected during 2021.

**24 COAST TO CAPITAL UPDATE - STRONGER, SMARTER, GREENER**

24.1 The Board considered a presentation from Jonathan Sharrock that provided an update on Coast to Capital's activities.

**25 GREATER BRIGHTON ONE PUBLIC ESTATE PROGRAMME ANNUAL REPORT**

25.1 The Board considered the One Public Estate Programme's 2020 Annual Report, which will also be submitted to the National OPE Team in the LGA and Cabinet Office as the Partnership's end of year report.

25.2 Councillor Walsh expressed his concern that a hospital site in Littlehampton continued to be an issue.

25.3 Andrew Swayne welcomed the report adding that he hoped to see greater linkage to the GB10 themes in future editions of the report.

25.4 **RESOLVED-** That the Board notes the content of the Programme's 2020 Annual Report.

**26 GREATER BRIGHTON INWARD INVESTMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE**

29.1 **RESOLVED-** That the Board note the report and the Investment Programme Update at Appendix 1.

The meeting concluded at 11.45am

