

WEST CHESHIRE TOGETHER

BUSINESS, ENTERPRISE and CULTURE Board meeting minutes.

13.00pm, Tuesday 27th October 2009, County Sports Club, Chester

Attending:

Sara Mogel
Mark Wilson
Charlie Seward
Annette Moor
Iain Paton
David Horstead
Rita Waters
Ricardo Gomez
Gill Rogerson
Robbie Taylor

Apologies:

Lisa Conway

Agenda Item:

1. Sara welcomed partners to the first meeting of the BEC Board and apologies noted.
2. The Board were advised of current membership and the expected roles and representation members will provide:

Sara Mogel (Chair), West Cheshire College

Mark Wilson (Vice Chair), Cheshire, Halton and Warrington Job Centre Plus

Charlie Seward, Cheshire West and Chester Council & Culture representative

David Horstead, CWEA / Prosperity Commission

Chris Brown/Ricardo Gomez, Visit Chester and Cheshire

Annette Moor, Chester Cathedral

Lisa Conway, West Cheshire Employability Partnership

Rita Waters, Chester Renaissance

TBC, Weaver Valley

TBC, Ellesmere Port

TBC, Rural and Market Towns

TBC, Representative of Business Engagement/Support infrastructure (Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses, Business Link NW, NWDA, Cheshire and Warrington Social Enterprise Partnership, Chester Business Club etc)

Andrew Donaldstone (Big Storage) has expressed an interest in becoming Chair to the Business Engagement/Support Group at the BEC workshop on 1st October. Broader discussion took place on identifying the correct representative from the local business community (blue chip or SME), it was agreed that in the meantime, a representative be selected from the network of business support infrastructure organisations.

Action:

- Sara to invite Andrew Donaldstone to join and attend the next BEC Board meeting.
 - Iain to identify a suitable representative from the Business Engagement Group.
3. Partners reviewed the 2009/10 mid year LAA performance report for the LSP, due to take place on the following Thursday. The current data indicates mixed performance levels at this stage of the year, for both designated and non-designated performance measures. There is outstanding information required for NI153, which is expected to score a “red” on the RAG (red, amber, green) rating. The in year position for NI163 and NI164 indicates an “amber” rating: we do not have current data to suggest either success or failure at this time of the year. However, the evidence for NI171 points to positive performance at present.
 4. With regard to the “local “indicators (non-designated), we are unable to forecast the value to the visitor economy with STEAM data at this stage of the year. We need data from the Cheshire and Warrington Social Enterprise Partnership to assess how many social enterprises are having growth after 12 months following start-up. However, the Ellesmere Port focused proxy measure using NI171 is rated “green” presently.

Mark commented that data underpinning NI153 is only released each 6 months by the DWP, so understanding current performance levels exactly is difficult. The targets for NI153 are achievable by national standards, however the recession is having a significant impact on the demand for JCP services and resources, which also means there are more clients coming from disadvantaged areas (which this indicator targets). Broadly, West Cheshire will be affected disproportionately worse than other parts of the North-West in terms of job losses.

However there are positive outcomes on the horizon, the new jobs to be created at M&S, Ellesmere Port is an opportunity to recruit the right people to these jobs, (with CORA support) to address this outcome as an example of BEC “securing future jobs”. APB’s could be charged more with this outcome by better linking local opportunities to better needs. With regard to value of visitor footfall, Chester Renaissance

collects a range of local data to identify “in year” performance levels but the information is not available across the Borough.

There is a need to de-mystify the meanings behind each indicator and look at alternative (most likely, local) indicators to help us understand the needs of employers and conversely local people to understand the miss-match of local “needs and opportunities”.

Actions:

- Ricardo to look at proxy measure information to help inform current status and report to Gill.
 - Charlie to liaise with colleagues to identify and agree on appropriate “culture” performance indicators.
 - Charlie to prepare a paper on current position of organisations/partnerships operating in the “cultural” sector, to help discussions on reflecting and engaging the cultural offer more prominently at BEC Board level and throughout broader partnership.
 - Gill to contact C&W Social Enterprise Partnership for latest data to update position on this outcome.
 - Robbie to report back on “technical information” which defines the national indicators to help partners better understand exactly what needs reporting, when and why. (The Group needed more detail on the use of historic data or whether for example NI163 and 164 count gains in net qualifications or existing qualifications.)
5. The Board were updated on the latest CAA report on the West Cheshire area from the Audit Commission. Each of the new unitary authority areas have not received any “red” or “green” tags as part of the first CAA evaluation. It is expected the final report will be available on the “ONE PLACE” web pages during the 2nd week of December as a public document. Partners were advised on the process of CAA to date and how the Virtual Network and Credit Crunch Task Group had responded with much of the regional information.
6. The Board was updated on the progress to develop and produce an Action Plan to respond to the recession and set up a “dashboard” of indicators to help provide current baseline position information, to help monitor and report progress over the coming months and years as the economy starts to improve. Partners commented that some of the summary analysis contained in the report needed to be updated and improved (claimant counts and numbers of NEETS).

Other areas offered cause for concern: currently a third of local businesses were at risk, increased unemployment in the house building sector, shortage of modern apprenticeships. Although GVA may achieve positive growth by 2011, the number of people, all ages in employment is expected to drop. Vauxhalls has guaranteed protection

until 2013, which contains automotive sectors continued vulnerability, with continued risks to the banking and finance expected, along with significant impacts on the public sector.

Gill introduced a spreadsheet to the Board and explained the process for performance managing the Action Plan to record progress. Gill would be responsible to chase and capture developments. The Action Plan will become a standing item at the future Board meetings and will become a concise and action orientated way of engaging partners and recording more projects to support overall intelligence on the local economy. Plan to be approved and endorsed by the LSP on 29/10/2009.

Action:

- Robbie to circulate the completed Action Plan to the Virtual network and ask how they may:
 - Directly contribute to it, and
 - Ask what is missing (via Task Group, other Thematic Partnerships, LSP)
 - Gill to ensure updated Action Plan is rolled out through “Bouncing Back” Campaign.
7. Mark updated on current progress to implement the FJF (Future Jobs Fund) programme across West Cheshire and the sub-region. In West Cheshire, 250 jobs will be created over 18 months, with 78 coming by the end of the financial year 2009/10.

The Group commented on the need to ensure vacancies are spread across West Cheshire and not be too Chester centred. Therefore, we need to combine more transport accessibility support for candidates who need to travel to take up opportunities. Some early problems were occurring with regard to eligibility to enter the programme (those aged 25+ from disadvantaged communities and completing pre-recruitment training and advice). A question was raised whether it was the employer or new employee who is counted?

Action:

- Mark to confirm measure of success in attaining 250 jobs and will report on progress at the next meeting in November.
8. Mark reported on the “Care First Careers” programme and the need to recruit 50,000 nationally into the sector. Employers will be offered £1.5k subsidy for each trainee they take on. The programme will be rolled out nationally from January 2010: it is aimed at de-stigmatizing careers in care and changing perceptions of the industry. There are always a constant number of local vacancies in this sector, it increasingly does not attract young people, nor promotes the whole range of care career opportunities available.

Action:

- Mark will report on local opportunities to participate in the programme at the next meeting, as JCP Cheshire, Halton and Warrington are piloting the programme locally.

9. The Board discussed how to bid for some local resources available through the levy applied to local Second Home Owners. A number of projects were proposed as supporting the work of the partnership and investing resources:

1) Cheshire F.R.S – idea to hold some breakfast lunches with local SME's to promote building and site security and safety measures to reduce risks of arson (could hold an event in each APB area as part of rollout with broader Partnership Framework). These would be relatively inexpensive, no more than £300 per event.

2) "Fusion " case study of work done with a local skills partnership in Cumbria, highlighted an opportunity to commission some independent research to map the needs of local employers and the skilled and education resources needed to fill gaps. This could be a pilot project, in terms of its scope (being limited to a single business sector) and a step to developing a formal skills partnership in West Cheshire or broader sub-regions.

3) Support to deliver a "master class" of courses to the sectors (e.g. Customer Services to get advice and training on customer skills, local historical knowledge, and knowledge of retail and hospitality services: for example, the "Welcome" to the total visitor experience.

4) Business coaches from NWDA need resourcing for 2010/2011

5) A project similar to Warrington Chamber of Commerce to support local job security e.g. £80k to help keep 50 jobs.

6) Small amount to support vacant shop fronts with local "culture" displays to be rolled out across the Borough.

Action:

- Sara to draft a couple of bids for funding to support a 'Fusion' type pilot research project and a second application to support arson awareness business breakfasts/lunches.

10. Dates of next meetings: **Friday 27th November, 9.30am at Castle Park, Frodsham.**

Tuesday 12th January, 2.00pm venue to be confirmed.