



Economic Development Board (Minutes)

Monday 18 July 2016 (2pm)

1. Attendees and apologies

Attendees

- Simon Dabell (Chairman, Visit IOW),
- Janet Stevens (Head of Workforce Development, IW College)
- Steve Porter (Chairman, IW Chamber)
- Norman Arnold, Chair (FSB IoW Vice-Chair)
- Cllr Jonathan Bacon (Leader, IWC)
- Matt Hill (Economic Development, IWC)
- Ashley Curzon (Head of Economic Development, IWC)
- Kevin Smith (Chief Executive, IW Chamber)

Apologies

- John Owen CMG MBE DL
- Cllr Ian Stephens (Executive Member for Regeneration, Economic Sustainability and Development)

2. Matters Arising

Minutes from the meeting held on the 9th May 2016 agreed and approved.

ACTION – KS to send AC partners flow diagram.

At the previous meeting an update was provided on the Wight BID. Subsequently the BID had successfully navigated the ballot phase. It was noted that this phase of the process was now subject to a 28 day period during which a request can be made to declare the ballot void.

Now that the College's executive team had commented on the Economic Development Plan (ED Plan) officers provided a brief overview of the process by which the Council's Executive Committee will formally adopt the plan, most likely in Sept 2016.

Members of the Board reiterated the need for an Executive Summary of the plan to be produced in parallel with the adoption process.

3. Discussion position of Chair (ongoing) and private sector membership

On the subject of the position of Chair the Board were informed that John Owen's health was gradually improving and that he was hoping to return by September or November. In response the stand-in Chair (NA) indicated that he was prepared to continue in the role on an interim basis.

The requirement for further independent private sector members of the Board is detailed in the Board's terms of reference and in the Memorandum of Understanding with the Chamber of Commerce.

Members expressed a view that no further private sector representation was needed as the current business bodies already represented sections of the business community. Officers then reminded the Board that the Chamber MoU and ED Board TOR specify the requirement for further independent private sector representatives. It was then noted that some potential private sector Board appointments were already represented elsewhere.

4. Potential to elect EDP priority area leads

The Board briefly discussed potential to adopt leads and concluded that the ED Plan already detailed the appropriate organisational leads for each priority and all sub-priorities.

Members also discussed the possibility of seconding business people to the Board on a project task and finish basis.

5. Potential local impacts of Brexit – information sources

The Chair (NA) indicated that he was keen to understand the balance of EU funding currently available locally and across all sectors of the economy including in agriculture. An approach had been made to the NFU locally. The risk of a net loss of funding needed to be more fully understood and if less nationally sourced economic funding might be available in the future.

At a recent Chamber Advisory Board some members indicated the approach was for 'business as usual' however many members also reported a degree of nervousness regarding the future. It was also noted that the current value of the pound may benefit exporters.

In terms of tourism VIOW reported that whilst the uncertainty and fall in the value of the pound against other currencies might lead to more staycations it was likely that visitor spend will be subdued with, potentially, a limited net gain for the sector.

6. Solent Growth Deal (SGD) submissions and Coastal Communities

The Board were advised that members of the Solent LEP executive attended a Ministerial Challenge session on the 11th July after the SGD round three submission were made in late June.

It had been suggested that the area was unlikely to get the £160m requested and so the next stage of the process was for the SLEP Board to prioritise projects based partially on Ministerial advice.

The Board were reminded that the final SGD proposal was to be submitted by the end of July 2016 with the outcome most likely announced in the Autumn Statement.

Officers provided an overview of the recently submitted Coastal Communities bid to provide a variety of new employment space in as East Cowes.

7. High School Heads input to ED

The Chamber updated fellow Board members on recent visits by Nick Heywood (Chair of the EBP Chamber group) to schools to meet Heads. The Heads have been provided with copies of the ED Plans for reference and then to be presented to the local Heads Forum for comment.

In response Officers indicated that it might be useful for such stakeholder to indicate how they might best support delivery with the Chamber leading on this area of activity.

Board members also discussed the positive investments happening in the high schools, in particular Ryde. The Chamber indicated that the Head at Ryde was willing to be more involved in education / business partnerships.

8. Apprenticeship Levy update

Board members were informed that the Apprenticeship Levy was scheduled to be implemented in April 2017 changing the way the government funds apprenticeships in England.

The levy will be payable by employers, in any sector including the public sector, with a pay bill of more than £3 million. The levy will be charged at a rate of 0.5% of an employer's annual pay bill with a levy allowance of £15,000 per year to offset against the overall levy liability.

In terms of the balance of funding it has been suggested that every £1 paid by employers will be matched by £2 from government.

It was noted that employers seem confused by the scheme and in particular the digital voucher and account schemes. SME engagement with the proposed Digital Apprenticeship Service will be critical as will ease of use).

It was noted the employers now had a greater degree of control to ensure that the training delivered meets employer requirements. The employer led trailblazer schemes have increased flexibility of delivery with employers now having able to select an apprenticeship framework or standard, choose the training provider and an assessment organisation.

9. AOB

The Board was provided with an up-date on the on plans to create a **Solent Combined Authority** with devolved powers and funding. The next phase of the programme is for a consultation phase.

The public will be asked for their views on plans to create a Solent Combined Authority as part of a consultation launching later in the week - Friday 22 July.

Portsmouth City Council approved draft plans for the proposals, following similar decisions from Southampton City Council's executive and the Isle of Wight Council's. The three now want to gauge public opinion before making a formal application to government.

The Solent Combined Authority would take on responsibility for services currently managed by central government with a focus on driving economic growth, improving infrastructure and transport links and delivering homes.

It is expected that government would give a Solent Combined Authority control of approximately £30m of additional funding per year for the next 30 years.

It was noted that the plans may not progress and the Board should adopt a waiting brief and then take action if new resources were not forthcoming.

It was noted that a paper went before the Employment Committee (EC) on the 11 July 2016 regarding proposed changes to the **Senior Management Structure** of the local authority with recommendations going before the Full Council later in the week (Wed 20th July). Changes to the structure included the creation of a new regeneration team.

The Board requested details of the timeline for the creation of this team, asked if the new Director position might be drawn from current internal resources, if any new director work with the ED Board and with the Solent LEP on infrastructure issues. Some members also suggested that a representative from the Board be involved in the selection process for the role of Director.

It was noted that a new director of regeneration will be responsible for ensuring the delivery and viability of significant schemes. In terms of recruitment if the Full Council accepted the recommendations of the EC a new roles other director posts (adult social services) may then be advertised in late July or early August followed by an advert for a director of regeneration.

Officers added that once in post a new director of regeneration will need to work with colleagues at the Solent LEP with regards to infrastructure funding. It was also noted that the position will be for an initial appointment of two years.

ACTION – Officers to provide the Board with details of the recruitment process once confirmed.

Officers informed the Board that work had been commissioned to assess the regenerative value of **IWC holdings in the Bay**, including Dinosaur Isle and involving the Town Council.

Members were informed that the area in question was from IW Zoo to Sandham Grounds with a real diversity of land and property ownership.

Chamber members informed the Board that work with various town councils was underway to identify aspirational plans for areas with-in the Bay.

Some members asked if the ED Board might be able to provide guidance on investment proposals and planning applications. Officers informed the Board that the Planning Authority was a distinct entity and subject to certain democratic processes. It was also noted that some Board member organisations may be able to positively influence investment decisions and already acted as consultees on certain planning applications.

The Chamber ED Advisory Board had undertaken a basic SWOT analysis on the IOW as an investment destination. The Chamber is planning to create a prospectus focussed on the higher-value priority sectors. It was noted that the investment at Woodside Bay had largely gone unnoticed with very little promotion although VIOW had met Darwin Escape's Commercial Director.

Close meeting at 3.10pm

Dates of future meetings

- Monday 19 September 2-3.30pm, County Hall
- Monday 21 November 2-3.30pm, IW College