

BLACK COUNTRY EXECUTIVE JOINT COMMITTEE

On Wednesday 23 June 2021 at 10.30am

To be held at Walsall Council House and via a Teams Virtual Meeting

Streamed via a Live YouTube Link

MINUTES - PUBLIC

VOTING MEMBERS - Present

Councillor Patrick Harley, Dudley MBC
Councillor Rajbir Singh, Sandwell MBC
Councillor Mike Bird, Walsall MBC (**Chair**)
Councillor Ian Brookfield, City of
Wolverhampton

NON VOTING MEMBERS – via Teams

Tom Westley, Black Country LEP

INVITED GUESTS - Present

Kevin O’Keefe, Dudley MBC
David Stevens, Sandwell MBC
Dr Helen Paterson, Walsall Council
(**Secretary**)
Tim Johnson, City of Wolverhampton

INVITED GUESTS – via Teams

Sarah Middleton, The Black Country
Consortium Ltd
Lara Smith, The Black Country Consortium
Ltd
Simon Neilson, Walsall MBC
Richard Lawrence, City of Wolverhampton
Helen Martin, Dudley MBC

Dr Helen Paterson Secretary for the Black Country Executive Joint Committee welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that as this is the Annual General Meeting, she would be the Chair person until a new Chair is elected.

Dr Paterson confirmed that as the Legislation has now changed, there is no longer Legislation in place to hold public meetings virtually and voting Members need to be physically present in a room together to vote. Dr Paterson confirmed that 4 voting members were present with her at Walsall Council House and the meeting was therefore quorate. Also present in the Council House were the Chief Executives from Dudley, Sandwell and Wolverhampton Local Authorities. All other meeting participants joined the meeting digitally via Microsoft Teams and members of the public were able to view the meeting LIVE online via YouTube.

Dr Paterson then asked each participant to confirm that they could see and hear proceedings and the meeting commenced.

Apologies

None.

Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair for 2021/22

Dr Paterson asked for nominations for Chair person for 2021/22 however, advised that Councillor Bird had indicated that he would be happy to continue.

Councillor Brookfield, Councillor Singh and Councillor Harley supported Councillor Mike Bird continuing as Chair person.

Dr Paterson asked for nominations for Vice-Chair person for 2021/22 however, advised that Councillor Brookfield had indicated that he would be happy to continue.

Councillor Bird, Councillor Singh and Councillor Harley supported Councillor Ian Brookfield continuing as Vice Chair person.

Decision 21/0024

Dr Paterson moved the recommendations that were put to the vote by way of a roll-call of BCJC members. The motion was subsequently declared carried and it was Resolved (unanimously) that the Joint Committee appoint Councillor Mike Bird as Chairperson and Councillor Ian Brookfield as Vice-Chairperson of the BCJC for the 2021/22 cycle.

Councillor Bird chaired the meeting from this point onwards.

Notes of Meeting held on 28 April 2021

Councillor Bird firstly welcomed Councillor Rajbir Singh, Leader of Sandwell Council to his first meeting of the Joint Committee.

Decision 21/0025

Councillor Bird moved approval of the minutes of the meeting on 28 April 2021 which was put to the vote by way of a roll-call of BCJC members. The motion was subsequently declared carried and it was Resolved (unanimously) that the minutes of the meeting held on 28 April 2021 be confirmed as a true record.

Matters Arising from the notes of the previous meeting

None.

Declarations of Interest

Decision 21/0026

Tom Westley declared an interest as a Governor at Dudley College, a Trustee of Dudley Academies Trust and a Director of the Institute of Technology and did not participate in any discussions relating to these.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended):

To agree that the public be excluded from the private session.

Decision 21/0027 resolved (unanimously)

That the public be excluded from the private session during consideration of Item 15 on the Agenda.

Not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Schedule 12(A) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)

Constitution and timetable of meetings 2021/22

Councillor Bird referred to the report previously circulated and explained that the report was the annual report to the Committee that captures all of the changes that have been made to the BCJC Constitution throughout the year. The Constitution and Protocols have now been updated to reflect these changes and the Forward Plan publication dates are at Appendix C and the Schedule of future meeting dates at Appendix D.

Decision 21/0028

Councillor Bird moved the recommendations that were put to the vote by way of a roll-call of BCJC members. The motion was subsequently declared carried and it was Resolved (unanimously) that the Joint Committee

- 2.1 Note the Black Country Executive Joint Committee Constitution (Appendix A) has now been updated (highlighted in yellow) to reflect the changes agreed at its meeting on 17 February 2021 regarding the removal of the Advisory Board, with Black Country Heads of Regeneration taking responsibility for wider consultation, including briefing Cabinet Portfolio Holders.
- 2.2 Note the Protocols have now been updated to reflect the change in 2.1 (Appendix B).
- 2.3 Approve the Forward Plan publication dates for 2021/22 as set out in Appendix C of the report.
- 2.4 Approve the Schedule of meetings for 2021/22 as set out in Appendix D of the report.

Black Country LEP Assurance Framework - Revisions 2021

Lara Smith referred to the report previously circulated and explained that revisions have been made to the Black Country LEP Assurance Framework and the related appendices to the document. These revisions are as a result of the amended Black Country Executive Joint Committee Governance arrangements, and the programme of continuous improvement to further simplify the Black Country LEP governance and transparency above and beyond published Government standards.

Decision 21/0029

Councillor Bird moved the recommendations that were put to the vote by way of a roll-call of BCJC members. The motion was subsequently declared carried and it was Resolved (unanimously) that the Joint Committee Approves the revised Black Country LEP Assurance Framework, included as an interactive Attachment 1 to the report.

Black Country Local Growth Deal - IT DIGITAL SKILLS AND INNOVATION – Amendment to Grant Agreement

Lara Smith referred to the report previously circulated and advised that this report relates to a change to the Outputs originally reported to the Joint Committee. Lara confirmed that the Benefits Costs Ratio (Value for Money) had also recently been updated following the reduction to Outputs and the project was still deemed to be good value for money.

Decision 21/0030

Councillor Bird moved the recommendations that were put to the vote by way of a roll-call of BCJC members. The motion was subsequently declared carried and it was Resolved (unanimously) that the Joint Committee

Approve the Accountable Body for the Growth Deal (Walsall Council) to proceed to amend the Grant Agreement with PTP Ltd to continue to deliver the Local Growth Fund (LGF) funded elements of the IT Digital Skills and Innovation project with delivery to continue up to the 2024/25 financial year.

Note: This change relates to a reduction in the business assists output. However the project is offering an increase in their other contracted outputs, to offset the reduction in business assists and ensure the impact on the project's Value for Money is not detrimental.

Black Country Digital Fund – Black Country Digital Strategy - Grant Agreement

Lara Smith referred to the report previously circulated and advised that the funding is requested to cover the costs of producing the documents needed for Black Country Digital Roadmap and delivery of activities across the Black Country in 2021/22. It is envisaged that this funding could come from the Gainshare that was accumulated from the Black Country Broadband Project. However, this is a capital budget and it is unlikely that costs incurred in developing a strategy would comply with Capital accounting standards. Therefore, it is proposed that initially these costs would be funded from the Growing Places revenue budget, and where applicable and eligible, recharged to the capital Black Country Digital Fund. Full details are in Section 5 of the report.

Councillor Brookfield advised that all LAs have their own digital strategy and therefore asked how this would link in to ensure we are all working to one Strategy.

Sarah Middleton advised that this work will build on the current local arrangements and ensure that where there is scale and cross boundary effectiveness by transferring best practice of understanding we can build from local arrangements and local skills will transfer.

Councillor Bird asked for clarification on what £60,000 will achieve.

Sarah Middleton advised that part of work is to fund capacity to develop a Strategic Framework and support local partnerships for dedicated resources to ensure that this is delivered in a timely manner.

Decision 21/0031

Councillor Bird moved the recommendations that were put to the vote by way of a roll-call of BCJC members. The motion was subsequently declared carried and it was Resolved (unanimously) that the Joint Committee Approve the Accountable Body (Walsall Council) to enter into a Grant Agreement with the Black Country Consortium Ltd for up to £60,000 to develop the Black Country Digital Strategy, initially funded from the Growing Places revenue budget, and where applicable and eligible, recharged to the capital Black Country Digital Fund.

Black Country Local Growth Deal – PROGRAMME APPROVAL OF THE 2020/21 PROGRAMME YEAR END SPEND – CAPITAL FUNDING

Lara Smith referred to the report previously circulated and advised that this is the first of 3 papers on today's agenda looking at closing down the final year of this programme.

On behalf of the Programme Management Office Lara thanked all colleagues and partners across the Black Country for their support with this programme that has been very successful. The Black Country Local Growth Deal Programme closed on 31 March 2021 and will now move to Output monitoring stage and will be reported back to MHCLG.

There is an additional two recommendations in this report linked to Very Light Rail (VLR) project (using freedoms and flexibilities) and they are proposing a swap between two funds to ensure that both programmes meet their targets – detail in section 3 of the report.

Councillor Harley advised that he fully supports the recommendations and added that the progress achieved on site for the VLR project is utterly immense and invited Council Leaders and business Leaders to visit the site as he felt that it is transforming. Councillor Bird and Councillor Brookfield advised they would be happy to visit the site once restrictions allow.

Decision 21/0032

Councillor Bird moved the recommendations that were put to the vote by way of a roll-call of BCJC members. The motion was subsequently declared carried and it was Resolved (unanimously) that the Joint Committee

- 2.1 Approves the year end position of the Growth Deal Projects, reflecting all changes to the Programme (Funding and Outputs) throughout the year and, to maximise the 2020/21 Growth Deal allocation expenditure, requests approval for various changes detailed in Attachment 1 of the report.
- 2.2 Approves that Very Light Rail Test Track expenditure of £612,051 in 2020/21 (currently funded from Growth Deal) is charged to the Getting Building Fund, to utilise unspent 2020/21 budgets allocated to the Very Light Rail National Innovation Centre project.
- 2.3 Approves that the Growing Places Fund (utilised to over-programme Growth Deal) is used to fund the Very Light Rail National Innovation Centre project costs of £612,051 in

2021/22, as the variance represents slippage rather than underspend. This will ensure that the Getting Building funds allocated to the Black Country in 2020/21 are fully utilised.

Getting Building Fund – PROGRAMME APPROVAL OF THE 2020/21 YEAR END SPEND – CAPITAL FUNDING

Lara Smith referred to the report previously circulated and advised that this is the first Year End report of a two year project. This report mirrors that of the previous report with reference to the VLR project with funding moving from Growth Deal to Getting Building Fund to ensure that targets are met. The first year financial target has been successfully met.

Councillor Brookfield advised that the National Brownfield Institute (NBI) project that is funded from the Getting Building Funding is also a transformational project and thanked the Black Country LEP and WMCA and the Local Authorities for their joint efforts on both VLR and NBI.

Councillor Harley and Councillor Bird added they would like to thank the Black Country LEP for the work they do for the region, and they are very proud of all of these projects.

Tom Westley thanked all of the Leaders for their remarks on behalf of the Black Country LEP and also thanked the Project Management Office for their hard work. Tom advised that the Black Country LEP are delighted that these projects are moving forward and were very proud of the work in the region.

Decision 21/0033

Councillor Bird moved the recommendations that were put to the vote by way of a roll-call of BCJC members. The motion was subsequently declared carried and it was Resolved (unanimously) that the Joint Committee

- 2.1 Approves the current position of the Getting Building Fund Projects, reflecting all changes to the programme throughout the year, and to maximise the 2020/21 Getting Building Fund allocation expenditure.
- 2.2 Approves that Very Light Rail Test Track expenditure of £612,051 in 2020/21 (currently funded from Growth Deal) is charged to the Getting Building Fund, to utilise unspent 2020/21 budgets allocated to the Very Light Rail National Innovation Centre project.
- 2.3 Approves that the Growing Places Fund (utilised to over-programme Growth Deal) is used to fund the Very Light Rail National Innovation Centre project costs in 2021/22, as the variance represents slippage rather than underspend. This will ensure that the Getting Building Fund allocated to the Black Country in 2020/21 are fully utilised.

Land and Property Investment Fund – PROGRAMME APPROVAL OF THE 2020/21 YEAR END SPEND

Lara Smith referred to the report previously circulated and advised that this is the Year End report on the Land and Property Investment Fund. Unfortunately the financial spend was quite low however this appears to be due to the impact on all industries and the building trade of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Project Management Office are confident that the future funds will be allocated and spent and this should all start to slowly increase over the next few months.

Councillor Bird, Councillor Harley and Councillor Brookfield felt that the availability of this type of funding was crucial to the Black Country and they were all grateful to the WMCA and the Black Country LEP for their support in bringing sites with enormous difficulties back into use.

Decision 21/0034

Councillor Bird moved the recommendations that were put to the vote by way of a roll-call of BCJC members. The motion was subsequently declared carried and it was Resolved (unanimously) that the Joint Committee Approve of the current position of the Land and Property Investment Fund Projects, reflecting all changes to the Land and Property Investment Fund Programme (Funding and Outputs) throughout the year and, to maximise the 2020/21 allocation.

Black Country Local Growth Deal – YMCA CLEVELAND ROAD – Amendment to the Existing Grant Agreement - Additional Funding Request

Lara Smith referred to the report previously circulated and advised that the PMO have been working closely with YMCA Team as the project has unfortunately been put on hold a number of times due to Covid 19 pandemic. These delays have created additional costs and some of these have been picked up by the YMCA themselves but not all. The additional grant (housing projects need completing) will help bring the project into completion within the next month. The grant however is subject to there being enough funding available in the Growth Deal.

Councillor Brookfield fully supports this request and added that he is aware that during the last 15 months the cost and availability of building materials has increased considerably. Councillor Brookfield felt that this may become a regular issue in the future and feels it's something Leaders and the PMO need to be mindful of and may need to budget for in the short to medium term.

Councillor Bird agreed with Councillor Brookfield and understand that there is an increase of 40% in timber and cement 25%. Feels that Leaders should look at scrutinising any variation clauses that have being put forward to us

Decision 21/0035

Councillor Bird moved the recommendations that were put to the vote by way of a roll-call of BCJC members. The motion was subsequently declared carried and it was Resolved (unanimously) that the Joint Committee

2.1 approve the Accountable Body for the Growth Deal (Walsall Council) to proceed to amending the Grant Agreement with the YMCA Black Country Group to deliver the Local

Growth Deal Fund (LGF) funded elements of the YMCA Cleveland Road project with delivery to continue up to the 2024/25 financial year.

2.2 The request is for additional grant value of £88,676.25 in 2020/21, subject to funding being available. Should funding be available the total grant award will be £1,029,676.25

PRIVATE SESSION (Public summary)

Not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Schedule 12(A) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)

Notes of Meeting held on 28 April 2021 – Private Session

Decision 21/0036

Councillor Bird moved approval of the Private Session minutes of the meeting on 28 April 2021 which was put to the vote by way of a roll-call of BCJC members. The motion was subsequently declared carried and it was Resolved (unanimously)

That the Private Session minutes of the meeting held on 28 April 2021 be confirmed as a true record.