

Meeting: County Durham Economic Partnership Board

Date & Time: 26 October 2023 10.00am

Venue: The Boardroom, New College Durham



Present:	Name	Organisation/Pillar Rep
	Glyn Llewellyn (GL)	Chair
	Alison Gittins (AG)	Durham Business Group
	Andy Broadbent (AB)	New College Durham (lead for People)
	Andy Kerr (AK)	DCC Head of Economic Development
	Claire Williams (CW)	Funding & Programmes DCC
	Cllr Elizabeth Scott (ES)	Durham County Council
	Dinah Jackson (DJ)	Rural Design Centre
	Glenn Martin (GM)	DCC
	Graham Wood (GW)	DCC Economic Development Manager
	Paul Marsden (PM)	Head of the Association of Secondary Schools
	Richard Baker (RB)	Durham University (lead for Innovation)
	Sarah Slaven (SS)	Business Durham (lead for Business Competitiveness)
	Sue Parkinson (SP)	CDEP Vice Chair
	Nicole Roe (NR) (Minutes)	Durham County Council
Apologies:	Ailsa Anderson	Engineering & Manufacturing Network
	Alan Smith	Believe Housing (lead for Inclusive Growth)
	Alison Clark	Durham County Council
	Amy Harhoff	Durham County Council
	Andy Bailey	Durham County Council
	Angela Brown	Durham County Council
	Duncan Peake	Raby Estates
	Kate Burrows	Durham Community Action (VCS Voice)
	Michelle Cooper	County Durham Community Foundation (VCS Voice)
	Reshma Begum	Federation of Small Businesses

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1.	Welcome and apologies	The chair welcomed all to the meeting and initiated round table introductions. Apologies were received and recorded	Chair	
2.	Chairs opening remarks	<p>The Chair noted that this was a very important time in the business of the CDEP Board, given that it is now charged with considering and taking ownership of the delivery plan for the Inclusive Economic Strategy. He emphasised the role of Board members in developing their relationships with other businesses, including through membership groups such as Durham Business Group, and ensuring that the IES and its delivery plan are widely understood through the Durham business community.</p> <p>AG highlighted that there is an opportunity to speak to the Durham Business Group members at an event on 14th November in New College Durham. GL and AG to discuss outside of the meeting.</p> <p>GL has met with a number of organisations who are impressed with what we are trying to achieve, and he reiterated how important it is that the board must work as one organisation to achieve this.</p>		
3.	Minutes of CDEP Board on 14 th June 2023	Minutes of 14 th June meeting were reviewed and agreed as a true record.		
4.	Matters Arising	There were no matters arising.		
5.	IES delivery Plan	<p>CW, GW & AK gave a joint presentation on the Inclusive Economic Strategy delivery plan. The object of this presentation was to provide an opportunity for the Board to consider the inform the Board and to request sign off the plan which was received with the papers in readiness to take to DCC Cabinet in November. This presentation would provide an opportunity for the Board to determine how best to hold delivery of the Plan to account. is to talk through the delivery of the plan and how the Board holds it to account and catch a flavour of the plan.</p> <p>CW delivered the first part of the presentation which covered the 5 P's (People, Productivity, Places, Promotion, Planet) and the actions to deliver across the first 2-3 years of the strategy. The Board agreed that the plan would be a live document and would be kept up to date to respond to changes in economic circumstances. It was noted that the strategy had been developed with partners and working groups that</p>		

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		<p>have met throughout the process alongside stakeholder events, consultations, and sustainability assessment with colleagues from the Environment Partnership, which had led to further material in relation to the Planet theme and the Climate Emergency Response Plan.</p> <p>The Board noted that the delivery plan covered each of the actions, and that they related back to the ambition of the IES. It also noted that partner has been identified to provide ownership and accountability to the Board for the actions identified. It was agreed that how the priorities can be made to link better together would become further defined throughout implementation.</p> <p>PEOPLE - GW presented this area of the plan. In terms of economic progress across the county, appropriately skilled workforces can be one of the biggest breaks on progress and development, as corroborated by feedback from businesses who reported that there has been significant improvement in this respect over the last 20 years but there is still lots to be done. It was further noted that activities which had been delivered as part of “business as usual” were coming to an end as the ESF programme winds down. The Technical Funding Group of the Board has now aligned, UKSPF resource and as a result a new model of employment support will commence in January. There will be no loss of support for residents in connecting them with the world of work and importantly the UKSPF provides flexibility to work with business to upskill their current workforce.</p> <p>A focus on digital has emerge as part of the Local Skills Improvement plan – this is an intrinsic component of skills development and continues to be supported through mainstream delivery as well as through the specific funds available through UKSPF to improve numeracy and literacy.</p> <p><i>Comments & Discussion</i></p>		

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		<p>Board members emphasised the importance of ensuring that this was built into the education system to provide younger residents with knowledge and aspiration for their future direction. A Board member referenced that there was an increasing importance being attached to green skills as well as digital skills within the education sector. For example, in the building of a new campus, opportunities had been sought for pupils to be involved with builders to raise their understanding of low carbon technologies and processes.</p> <p>The Board recognised that there was currently a difficult economic with very low growth across the economy which required effort to remediate the situation. However, the development of the IES and its delivery plan provided the impetus for action to redress this</p> <p>A Board member expressed his support of the work being done and what is in development and recognised that the colleges and university are trying to work together across all the sectors/strands to support this. He cautioned the need to be conscious of timescales as March 2025, which sees the end of UKSPF funding, and the introduction of NEMCA. It was important that communications were clear and timely. The Vice-chair agreed and stated that this was not a concern unique to People and Skills but was echoed across all areas of IES delivery. However, whilst future provision was unclear, the approach which was taken by CDEP in terms of maximising the impact of investment by working across silos would bear fruit in any future funding regime</p> <p>PRODUCTIVITY – SS updated the Board.</p> <p>She highlighted that County Durham benefits from having a good network of organisations and providers involved in supporting businesses. This process has given us the ability to understand our collective direction of travel and the ability to work together to achieve this whilst remaining realistic in what we can achieve in the timescales.</p>		

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		<p>She highlighted that there are 4 main areas of focus within this agenda, and that there were significant developments in each – both in terms of what is being delivered but also in how collaboration and partnership working is maximising its effectiveness, She also stressed that work was underway to prepare the Partnership for the next round of the delivery plan, as part of an approach of being proactive rather than reactive. She discussed each in turn:</p> <p><i>Harnessing the power of our major employment sectors</i> - identifying sectors where County Durham performs well and where there is an opportunity to further develop, with a view to putting in place actions in place to drive this forward</p> <p><i>Providing excellent support</i> - There is excellent support for business, and we are building on what has gone before with European funding. Using the £8m of the UK Shared Prosperity fund we have been able to work with enterprising start-up in the county and be informed of how we can support them and integrating support to bring organisations together to strengthen buy-in and we are looking to join up and have a clear offer and this will be implemented in terms of contracting with different providers to deliver their support.</p> <p><i>Expanding the thriving innovation ecosystem</i> - The Partnership has benefited enormously from having Durham University and other key partners as part of the cross-cutting Innovation Working Group which has led to research for future delivery plans and how we can build understanding of the barriers constraining innovation. As a result, a project using the UKSPF to link with other universities in the Northeast to drive innovation has been commissioned and has commenced delivery.</p> <p><i>Driving good business practices</i> – we are keen to promote good business practices and are working with businesses with purpose and who play a part in the community to do this and recognise County Durham as a place of good employment.</p> <p><i>Comments & Discussion</i></p>		

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		<p>SS agreed to attend a meeting of the Durham Business Group to provide members with further information. A Board member reported that a partner in Clive Owen Accountancy had stated that they were not aware of this type of approach to productivity being taken elsewhere in the region and had welcomed it,</p> <p>SS advised that the Business Durham website promotes events and would be available to any Board member wishing to highlight any if that would be useful.</p> <p>PLACE – the presentation recognised that there has been huge amount of money/investment already made in place and that referenced ongoing projects i.e., £25m Town and Village Programme (£8m spent to date with £12m allocated and some remaining for allocation). Work is underway to consider other investment sources which equates to £90m direct funding. It would be important to consider we shape the visions and master plans of these towns and villages; instead of taking a purely planning led process, it would be important to put communities at the heart of the work. move away from master plans into strategic place plans. A rolling programme to look at existing master plans to see how we build the strategic place plans for the 14 settlements is now underway</p> <p>The presentation highlighted that one piece of work imminently going forward is the Durham City Vision which considers changes to high streets due to the move to online retail, and how to adapt to maximise p footfall.</p> <p>Unlocking employment land - onsite development will be the engine room of development over the next 2 years with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Net Park Phase 3 – progressing well with the focus on delivery in the planned period on time and on budget. • Launch of Durham City Innovation District in Aykley Heads site - Phase 1 of a 15-month procurement programme to identify a partner to develop the site. 		

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 300 hectares of land allocated for new employment uses – this will need to be reviewed to see that we have the right amount of employment land in the right places and where future demand will be accommodated. <p>Improving physical connectivity is challenging, in part because of the rurality of the county and recent changes in national priorities. A connectivity strategy needs to be developed to ensure we have bus services at the right time of day to ensure functionality, maximising communication about journeys and piloting on demand bus service.</p> <p>Digital infrastructure – there are a number of programmes being delivered and are consideration is now being given to further potential activity, such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how do we ensure home working is enabled for everyone especially those in social housing • How do we create digital hubs in rural settlements with high quality broadband and also good quality broadband for home working • Driving 5g innovation and 4g capability in rural areas <p><i>Comments & Discussions</i></p> <p>There was a general agreement that certainty was a prime prerequisite to giving businesses the confidence to invest in growth and that the delivery plan of the IES should serve to provide that certainty. Communicating it to businesses, and ensuring that it was delivered as promised, was therefore key and was a prime responsibility of the Board.</p> <p>Promotion Inward investment has a large focus in the plan, with Business Durham and Visit County Durham working hand in hand to achieve this. The priorities are:</p>		

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		<p>Clear Brand – a perception survey report had been carried out which recognised that place branding is crucial and speaks to the unique character of County Durham and is more than a logo.</p> <p>Visitor economy - Overnight stays -need to grow as overnight visitors spend a significant amount more than day visitors.</p> <p>Enhance cultural development – County Durham is the devolution lead for the NE on Culture and Tourism. Work is underway on portfolio development and ensuring that this is shaped for the whole of the northeast. It was recognised that screen industry partnerships presented significant opportunities for County Durham.</p> <p>Inward investment – promotion of the County to attract inward investment is being driven by a group drawn from across all areas of regeneration and growth.</p> <p>An Investment Plan was being developed, this being a clear investment pitch across county Durham to look across the range of capital projects and how they can contribute to the IES delivery, identifying the right funding sources. Further information would be presented to the next Board with the plan being launched ahead in Spring 2024 ahead of the Mayoral election.</p> <p>Board members commented on the need to address communication black spots in the connectivity framework and on the need to reflect how branding works with different audiences, citing as an example how</p> <p>international investors had been targeted with the “Passionate People Passionate Places” brand but recognising that in developing the application of any Durham brand, it would be important to consider how it would be applied to different audiences.</p> <p>.</p> <p>PERFORMANCE</p>		

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		<p>The Board discussed how to manage and monitor the actions in the Delivery Plan and it was recognised that the targets set were ambitious, but that these sit alongside gathering an understanding of how delivery is connecting with and affecting business and, in an economic sense, residents. In this connection, scorecards have been developed which consider geographic differences, but which provide a snapshot which will be updated on an annual basis.</p> <p>Board agreed that they were in agreement with the delivery plan, but needed to consider how we communicate this to the business and wider audience and how members of the board could use materials moving forward.</p>		
6.	Next Steps Options	<p>The Board signed off the plan and it can now be considered through the governance arrangements of Board members, including Cabinet at DCC, on that basis.</p> <p>The Board discussed next steps, considering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we continue to engage, and to engage with people we have not engaged with so far? • The role of CDEP Board in implementing the Plan • opportunities and how do we explore and exploit them <p>CW summarised with 3 options:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continuation of 4 thematic working groups focused on the pillars within the IES of People, Productivity, Place and Promotion 2. Form new CDEP IES Implementation Subgroup 3. Hybrid of 1 & 2. IES delivery/implementation subgroup supported by ad hoc groups focusing on specific activities/themes <p>There was agreement that that option 3 is most favourable, recognising that the Board owns and has responsibility for this strategy. A huge amount of work has gone into the development to date, and it was important not to lose the momentum we currently have. It was recognised that clear ownership was imperative and that the creation of an implementation sub-group, charged with driving this on behalf of the Board, would achieve this. The role of the Technical Funding Group who performed a similar function on behalf of the Board in the governance of UKSPF funding was cited as an example of how this was effective. To support this, it was suggested that existing</p>	Claire Williams/ Glenn Martin	

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		<p>groups be used on an ad hoc basis where this was appropriate to the subject matter, and a list of these had been developed. The approach that would be taken was to focus the themes/pieces of work on real time challenges and opportunities to drive the strategy forward, selecting themes which are pertinent and relevant at the time and ensuring the right people to help on that agenda are fully utilised.</p> <p>ACTION – SP to assist with the Development and Implementation sub-group of the Board, sit adjacent to the Technical Funding group and to replace the moribund Business, Enterprise, and Skills group.</p>		
4.	Business Conference	<p>SS advised that there was to be an annual business conference – focusing on the key themes of the IES – with the first planned for Spring 2024 around the green economy theme.</p> <p>Business Durham has volunteered to coordinate a small group to develop the conference. The Chair wished to be involved and the Board was asked to provide the details of any other interested parties to SS.</p> <p>RB suggested that the date may be useful to consider in light of the mayoral election as this may be an opportunity for the new mayor to be involved. SS will take this idea to the development group.</p>	Sarah Slaven	
5.	UKSPF Progress	<p>SP gave a brief background on the fund for those who do not have the previous information.</p> <p>Almost all of the allocated UKSPF funds has now been allocated. With c90% of the funding committed and we are on track to commit the remaining 10% over the next few months. It was noted that this compared favourably with other parts of the region where only approximately 66% of funds had been committed.</p>	Sue Parkinson	

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		<p>£13m has been allocated to the supporting local business agenda – including £8m to the productivity and growth programme, £3m into enterprise programme and £2m into the Durham element of the innovation activity which the University is leading on.</p> <p>A similar approach to the Communities and Place with £6.5M committed with £5m into a community infrastructure programme.</p> <p>People and Skills element commitments are £5M into employment support in County Durham and £4M into Skills Support.</p> <p>SP advised that she proposed to invite projects to attend future board meetings to inform on the detail of what is being delivered in each strand.</p>		
6.	Any Other Business	No other business was raised		
	Date and time of Next Meeting	10am 13 th December 2023 AB offered New College Durham as a venue		