

Meeting: County Durham Economic Partnership Board

Date & Time: 28th February 2024 1.00pm

Venue: Hybrid meeting – Believe Housing, Spectrum Business Park, Seaham



Present:	Name	Organisation/Pillar Rep
New College		
	Glyn Llewellyn (GL)	Chair
	Ailsa Anderson (AA)	Engineering & Manufacturing Network
	Alison Clark (AC)	Head of Culture, Sport & Tourism, DCC
	Alan Smith (AS)	Believe Housing (Lead for Inclusive Growth)
	Andy Bailey (ACB)	Durham County Council
	Andy Kerr (AK)	DCC Head of Economic Development
	Duncan Peake (DP)	Raby Estates
	Kate Burrows (KB)	Durham Community Action (VCS Voice)
	Michelle Cooper (MC)	County Durham Community Foundation (VCS Voice)
	Reshma Begum (RB)	Federation of Small Businesses
	Richard Baker (RBaker)	Durham University (Lead for Innovation)
	Sarah Slaven (SS)	Business Durham (Lead for Business Competitiveness)
Also, in attendance		
	Angela Brown (ABrown) (minutes)	Durham County Council
	Helen Riddell (HR)	Public Health, DCC
	Linda Wilson (LW)	New College Durham
Online Via Teams		
	Alessandra Coda (AC)	Metro Dynamics
	Kevin Fenning (KF)	Metro Dynamics
	Sue Parkinson (SP)	CDEP Vice Chair
Apologies:		
	Alison Gittins	Durham Business Group

	Amy Harhoff	Durham County Council
	Andy Broadbent	New College Durham (Lead for People)
	Cllr Elizabeth Scott	Durham County Council
	Kirsty Wilkinson	Public Health, DCC
	Paul Marsden	Head of the Association of Secondary Schools

Item No.	Subject	Discussion and Decision	Lead Officer(s)	Timescale
1.	Welcome and apologies	GL welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies for the meeting were noted		
2.	Minutes of CDEP Board meeting on 13th December 2023	Minutes of 13 th December 2023 were agreed as a true record of the meeting		
3.	Matters Arising	There were no matters arising.		
4.	Chair's Opening Remarks	GL informed the Board that the economy is currently challenging, and he would like to know what the reflection is from Board members given that this is directly relevant to our obligation to deliver the IES. The Chair also suggested he would like a Board discussion in the future on zero growth in the economy. He reported that BD/CDEP had held its first business conference yesterday on the Green Economy, with excellent speakers and around 80 businesses in attendance. There were encouraging comments from those attending. SS agreed that she heard all positive comments from people who had attended, there were workshops on the afternoon which were all very well attended. We need to keep the momentum going, Tony Cleary from Lanchester Wines was the keynote speaker and was very complementary about the Northeast and developments here		
5.	Place Branding – Alison Clark	Alison Clark presented on Place Branding <i>Questions/Comments</i> GL felt that this gives us a plan of where we are. He asked if this was just for UK? AC replied that as we go into devolution, we will be part of a		

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		<p>really strong and vibrant Northeast Brand which works both globally and nationally.</p> <p>AA asked if there are any plans to maybe work with school children as their view of the world will be what will be going on in 20 years' time? AC replied that one consulting group is working with children in the Northeast.</p> <p>SP agreed that there is a need to differentiate County Durham, but that differentiation has to harmonise with what Visit Britain are doing, Visit England are doing and what the North East are doing, but equally to recognise that Durham is a multi-central location with a mixture of environments in its various settlements, and thus the Brand needs to be relevant to all without being so universal as to be bland. AC mentioned that this is the reason they are taking this piece of work to lots of places to make sure they get an understanding on what others think of us, as without this understanding then the place branding does not make sense, so we need to talk to young people and different groupings.</p> <p>DP felt that the perception for research is very interesting there are a few hard to hear messages in there. We are doing things in Co Durham, so it is quite positive piece of work and there is chance to blow those perceptions and start to disseminate the message of what is happening in the area. We should start to identify some ambassadors to get the message out to show it is a great place to invest/live etc.</p> <p>ACB felt there are challenges as Durham City is not York City; York has multiple opportunities to keep a visitor busy for whole week in York City whereas Durham is spread across the County in different areas which requires access to transport. He questioned whether this work focused on Durham City? AC confirmed that this relates to the whole of Durham County, the city by itself not being enough.</p>		

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		<p>SS said we need to view this as positive information as we know there is a whole lot more to County Durham than what people think, it gives us useful information of how to sell Durham; something which historically has not been as well done as it could have been</p> <p>HR built on SP's remarks, mentioning that community networks need to harness the next stage of the project and it should be shared with that group.</p> <p>RB asked if we had the demographics of the people that were surveyed, AC did not have it to hand but said the proportion were of sample relate population. DP asked if it was spread across the country and AC confirmed it was.</p> <p>RBaker mentioned that the University have a lot of data and recommended that it be coordinated as he felt that there were significant opportunities.</p> <p>AK agreed and questioned whether there was sufficient capability to exploit them all. He suggested that the key lay in getting the right messages to the right audiences. KB suggested by way of example that a focus on micro businesses and also volunteer led social enterprise/action would need bespoke message about social drive, as this is a driving force beyond pure profit with this audience, and messages need to recognise this. AC agreed</p>		
6.	County Durham Investment Framework – Andy Kerr/Kevin	<p>AK introduced the presentation from the Consultants in relation to the County Durham Investment Framework</p> <p><i>Questions/Comments</i></p>		

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	<p>Fenning/Alessandra Coda</p>	<p>SP mentioned that first page showed a range of capital projects from Industry sector but felt that the University Intune project was not a capital project – did the document therefore concentrate just on capital projects with this one exception.</p> <p>KF replied that these were the projects which had been put forward by DCC colleagues. SP suggested that harmonisation between capital and revenue projects would be helpful – either to include revenue investment priorities or not, but not to do so selectively without justification,</p> <p>MC said that, on a cursory glance, she suggested that brown land availability should be highlighted. She also suggested that the priorities of the VCS are not represented in the document, specifically in terms of people and skills</p> <p>AK drew a distinction between the Investment Plan and the IES delivery plan, and MC agreed that SP has raised a valid point in that the purpose of the investment plan needs to be clear and that there is a need talk to communities</p> <p>DP accepted everything MC had said and reminded everyone that the investment plan is a pitch deck and needs therefore to have resonance with its audience (i.e., investors)</p> <p>AA was supportive but felt that the plan could concentrate things that make us different from other areas.</p> <p>DP said he thought that existing businesses where really important but the opportunity to grow the visitor economy as a whole should not be disregarded. He saw this document as a pitch deck to attract business to inward investment.</p>		

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		<p>AS agreed, that it was important to have absolute clarity on the purpose of the document.</p> <p>RBaker felt that the document warranted further study but that on first reading he felt that a list of successful Durham startups would be helpful. KJ felt that the inclusion of projects that support SMEs would be valuable, and KB felt that a rural dimension was missing. HR felt that the need to improve health should also be reflected</p> <p>.</p> <p>AK said it was a live document and it will be constantly updated, and that the timing is crucial, as it was important to have something in place before a new Mayor is elected. This puts Durham in a good position to influence the NEMCA plans</p> <p>ACB whether the forthcoming elections would cause a delay because of Purdah, but AK advised that this was not the case</p> <p>AC mentioned that because of the way Local Authorities are working in NEMCA, including with the involvement of Durham County Council, work was going on behind the scenes</p> <p>SS said that the capital focus of the document created a risk around deliverability of the IES since this required core revenue funds. She suggested that, as County Durham partners, we need to influence how revenue activity is funded across the region. She said that partners need to be speaking as one voice as a County.</p>		

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7.	State of the County - All	<p>GL asked for updates from Board members in relation to the 'State of the County'</p> <p>RB said the quarterly survey to measure confidence has fluctuated up and down with nothing being consistent apart from the fact it is consistently below 2022 levels. Confidence is starting to pick up, demonstrating some growth ambition, but labour costs and the retention of staff are a challenge,</p> <p>AA said one of the biggest issues is skills displacement, stating that a number of inward investors don't currently have appropriately skilled people to deliver, which is fuelling displacement and as a result firms are holding back on investment</p> <p>MC reported having hosted the Bank of England Community Breakfast, bringing together members of the community with the Monetary Policy Unit, at which the message given to the BoE was that high interest rates meant that the standard of living in communities was challenging. MC also reported that issues of skills displacement were prevalent and also that the award of grants to community and voluntary sector organisations was at a higher-than-normal level, and this without the effect of public sector cuts fully being recognised. It was clear that funding is becoming less available at the very time that demand for it is increasing.</p> <p>KB reported that, in some sampling they had recently carried out, 82% of respondents said contracts they receive do not cover contractual minimum wage levels, which is causing obvious issues.</p> <p>AS reported similar findings including in pressure in the jobs market. As part of the not-for-profit sector, they find general overhead costs a challenge, and a particular issue facing the social housing sector is the cost of rectifying issues of damp and mould caused through condensation in an aging housing stock.</p>		

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8.	UKSPF & DIG Update – Sue Parkinson	<p>SP discussed the paper circulated. She suggested that there was now a need to formally advise the County Strategic Partnership of the issues raised in it, so that the Board could play its part in ensuring that County Durham’s issues were properly represented. GL agreed. KB mentioned that she shared these concerns and had already raised these with AK.</p> <p>SP mentioned if we do not use this partnership for what it is the sum being more than the parts then what is the point? We need to understand and make sure that the right people are having the right conversations using the same voice</p> <p>AK pointed out that within the Combined Authority, discussions were taking place on a variety of fronts. SS advised that the particular issues facing the south of the Tyne had already been articulated by partners from Durham and Sunderland and agreed that the CDEP was an appropriate vehicle to help take this forward. AS reminded the Board</p> <p>that the NE Housing partnership was also a relevant vehicle for discussion. SP reinforced the point that the partnership needs to ensure that our voice is heard at a partnership level and also that individual partners are speaking as one</p> <p>RB reported that she has met with mayoral candidates and relayed the need to take account of elements of best practice, which she believes is being heard by senior stakeholder groups.</p> <p>SS mentioned that where activity uses Shared Prosperity Fund, given lead times this will start to come to an end in the next six months. It was therefore imperative that we ensure that there are measures in place to allow seamless delivery of the IES in those circumstances, which makes this work particularly pressing. It was agreed that the Chair write to the Chair of the CSP setting out the CDEPs concerns and seeking her support in raising them at appropriate levels.</p>		

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9.	Any Other Business	<p>It was reported that New College Durham had won a prestigious Association of Colleges Beacon Award, and the Chair passed on the Board's congratulations.</p> <p>ACB mentioned that the Safer Durham Partnership Strategy is being renewed and will be going to SDP Board in middle of March. He will make sure this Board is sighted on the consultation. The Chair thanked him.</p>		
	Date and time of Next Meeting	5th June 2024 @ 1pm Venue TBC		