

OPEN

## Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee

8 April 2024

## Cheshire and Warrington Business Advisory Board

Report of: Philip Cox, CEO, C&W LEP/ECW

Report Reference No: CWJC/03/23-24

Ward(s) Affected: All

Significant/Key Decision?	Yes/No	Definition (to be deleted once completed)
Cheshire West and Chester	No	Constitution <a href="#">Page 115.</a>
Warrington	No	Constitution <a href="#">page 41</a>
Cheshire East	No	Constitution <a href="#">Page 78</a>

### Purpose of Report

1. This report seeks Joint Committee approval for a Terms of Reference for a newly created Cheshire and Warrington Business Advisory Board (C&WBAB). The objective is to ensure that a strong, independent, and diverse local business voice continues to add value to wider economic strategies and delivery programmes.

### Executive Summary

2. In the guidance issued by Government on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023, relating to the integration of LEP functions into Local Authorities, reference is made to the need for a Business Advisory Board (BAB). The C&W LEP has benefited from extensive private sector insight and leadership since its inception in 2011. This 'business voice' has been a valuable source of research and intelligence for the three Local Authorities, assisting in policy formation, intervention programme development, delivery, and prioritisation.

3. Creating a C&WBAB will ensure expert advice on the role of business and different sectors, on the performance of the Cheshire and Warrington economy and to influence policy to stimulate economic growth, productivity and competitiveness, whilst supporting Cheshire and Warrington in its ambitions for inclusive growth and sustainability. Terms of reference outline how this voice will be exercised across future sub-regional working.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Joint Committee is recommended to:

1. To form the Business Advisory Board on the terms outlined in this report.
2. To adopt the proposed Terms of Reference for the Business Advisory Board attached at Appendix A.
3. To start the process of recruiting the members of the Business Advisory Board and that officers consult with the Chair of the Joint Committee on the role descriptions for the BAB Chair and members.
4. That the Joint Committee agree the appointments to the Business Advisory Board at its next meeting.
5. That the Chair of the Business Advisory Group be invited to attend the Joint Committee

## Background

4. The C&W LEP has benefited from extensive private sector insight and leadership since its inception in 2011. This 'business voice' has been a valuable source of research and intelligence for the three Local Authorities, assisting in policy formation, intervention programme development, delivery, and prioritisation.
5. All three Councils agreed at their meetings in February 2024 that a Business Advisory Board should be set up to support the future governance arrangements and that the Joint Committee should agree its terms of reference.
6. In August 2023, government guidance was issued which included guidance on business representation and which largely echoed the proposals that C&W leaders had already agreed including:  
*... an Economic Growth Board (or similar) made up of local business leaders and relevant representative bodies to ... provide the view of local businesses ... and work with local leaders to create a broad economic strategy for the area.*

7. Further government guidance in December 2023 clarified some areas but did not introduce anything that conflicted with the approach already outlined.

### **Work of Developing the Proposals**

8. Working with Local Authority Growth Directors, the LEP convened a 'BAB Design Group' to consult with the business community and gather their views on the structure and function of the proposed BAB.
9. The Group was made up of current and former LEP board members, business representative organisations, individual businesses and other relevant parties, together with LA representatives. The group included members from across Cheshire and Warrington, with interests in large and small businesses, education, social enterprise, visitor economy, rural and urban, as well as individuals with links to Chambers of Commerce, Federation of Small Business, Business Improvement Districts, NW Business Leadership Team and Institute of Directors among others, numbering approximately 35 individuals.
10. Prior to the first meeting of the BAB Design Group, research was undertaken into the formation of similar boards in other areas (6 in total), both where that work was complete and also where it was ongoing. This allowed the group to understand options and begin to develop an approach that both draws on the experience of other areas whilst also being tailored to the needs of Cheshire and Warrington.
11. The group met four times, as well as exchanging views via email. A number of one-to-one meetings also took place to ensure that group members who were unable to attend all meetings were kept up to date with the discussion, whilst additional briefings were held with LA representatives.

### **Proposed Terms of Reference for the Business Advisory Board**

12. The BAB should have meaningful input into the work of developing the Cheshire and Warrington economy. The BAB Design Group felt that the best way of achieving this objective would be for officers to work with the BAB at an early stage during the development of strategies and policies, in the manner of a 'co-production' which would also include other stakeholders.
13. It was suggested that, following the approach in other areas such as Manchester and Liverpool, individual BAB members would work closely with officers on particular priorities, reporting back to the main BAB.

14. It was agreed by all three authorities in February that the Chair of the Business Advisory Board ('BAB') could be an ex officio member of the Committee and may speak at meetings of the Committee but not vote. The Chair of the Business Advisory Board may present reports to the Committee from the BAB. The Design Group has also suggested that when papers are submitted to the LAJC they should include a paragraph setting out the views of the BAB on the issues under consideration. This would be similar to the paragraphs that are included in papers to LAs that set out the views of Monitoring and s.151 Officers and will provide an assurance to LAJC that the BAB has been consulted and to members of the BAB that their input has been considered.
15. The Design Group has prepared a suggested set of Terms of Reference (ToR) for the BAB, which is attached at Annex 1 and provides a framework for BAB members to bring their knowledge, expertise and networks together in a selfless way, to represent the voice of business in the development of economic strategy for Cheshire and Warrington and to support and champion the region.
16. The draft Terms of Reference propose that:
  - the Board should comprise approximately 15-20 members, recruited via an open and transparent process;
  - the BAB should include representation from social enterprise, culture, skills, health, young people, the Local Visitor Economy Partnership, and should be fully reflective of the other characteristics of the region's business community such as size, geography and sector as well as reflecting the composition of C&W's population. They also propose reserving three places for representatives of the Business Representative Organisations (eg Chambers, FSB etc);
  - appointments to the BAB should be for three years, but to avoid a future full refresh of membership some initial appointments should be made for two years and one year;
  - to provide continuity, to appoint up to four existing LEP board members to join the initial BAB for a one year period;
  - The BAB should be able to form sub-groups where needed and co-opt additional members, for example where they require specialist expertise;
  - Members should be expected to abide by the Nolan principles.
17. In addition, BAB Design Group emphasised the importance of having a fully representative, diverse and inclusive BAB, supporting the region in its ambitions for inclusive growth and sustainability and reflecting policies on equality, diversity and inclusion. These are also embedded in the ToR.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

18. Following Government guidance, a significant consultation and co-creation process took place with the local business community to design a future business group. This report therefore meets both local wishes and adheres to Government guidance.

## **Other Options Considered**

19. Research was undertaken on the formation of business boards in other areas of England. As part of the work to develop a C&W BAB options based on these case studies were considered and built upon to create the proposal outlined in this report.

## **Implications and Comments**

### *Monitoring Officer/Legal*

20. The Councils agreed to set up a Business Advisory Board at their meetings in February. The Business Advisory Board is set up as an informal structure and not a formal committee of the Council. There are no direct legal implications as it is not part of the constitutional arrangements of the Councils. The Joint Committee can invite others to attend its meetings.

### *Section 151 Officer/Finance*

21. There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report. All secretariat services will be provided by existing ECW staff within budget.

### *Policy*

22. This will ensure that there is a continued business voice supporting sub-regional priorities and is in line with the guidance from Ministers that all areas inheriting LEP functions should establish a Business Advisory or private sector Economic Growth Board. For the future, the C&W BAB can help ensure relevant policies reflect private sector insight.

### *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*

23. Equality, diversity and inclusion considerations will be embedded within an open recruitment process to C&W BAB.

### *Human Resources*

24. There are no implications.

*Risk Management*

25. There are no implications.

*Rural Communities*

26. There are no direct implications. Ensuring representation from business in key areas of priority such as the rural economy will form part of the recruitment process to the Board.

*Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)*

27. There are no implications.

*Public Health*

28. There are no implications.

*Climate Change*

29. There are no implications.

<b>Access to Information</b>	
Contact Officer:	Paul Chapman (ECW)
Appendices:	A. Terms of Reference Cheshire and Warrington Business Advisory Board
Background Papers:	N/A

## APPENDIX A

Name	Cheshire and Warrington Business Advisory Board
Position	<p>The overarching remit of the Business Advisory Board (the 'Board') is to be the Cheshire and Warrington sub-region's expert advisory group on the role of business and different sectors, on the performance of the Cheshire and Warrington economy and to influence policy to stimulate economic growth, productivity &amp; competitiveness, whilst supporting Cheshire and Warrington in its ambitions for inclusive growth and sustainability.</p> <p>Board Members should bring a knowledge of their sector, be advocates of the sub-region economy, as well as promoting the sub-region to national and international audiences, supporting inward investment activity where possible.</p> <p>The Business Advisory Board will integrate with the Local Authorities Joint Committee, providing advice on the development of economic strategy, on wider economic development and how business is impacted.</p> <p>Members are expected to take a strategic role rather than act in the interests of their individual sectors and/or organisations.</p>
Purpose of the Board	<p>The overarching purposes of the Business Advisory Board are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work with Local Authorities, Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington and others in the development of economic strategy for the Region.</li><li>• Be consulted by the Joint Committee on any economic or other decisions that will impact upon the Cheshire and Warrington business community.</li><li>• Represent the voice of business in key Cheshire and Warrington partnerships and stakeholder groups.</li><li>• Help to shape delivery of business support and inward investment functions with the Growth Hub and Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington.</li></ul> <p>The Board is advisory in nature and more specifically will provide Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington with insights on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sector intelligence and the direction of the economy</li></ul>

- Operation of the economy and the key drivers shaping employment, productivity and sector/cluster performance
- Supply-chain issues that are holding back the growth of the economy.
- Opportunities for growth, innovation or investment across the economy and its key clusters & sectors
- Opportunities for links between the Board and wider economy to drive productivity, investment and employment
- Outline of potential economic development initiatives / interventions
- ‘Horizon scanning’ for different funding initiatives (private and public)
- Ideas to help promote the Cheshire and Warrington economy more widely

With this in mind, the Board will create an annual action plan focused on supporting the economy.

Membership The Board will be made up of 15-20 full members who will be selected by an open process and appointed by the Local Authorities Joint Committee.

The Board membership will be representative of the business community of Cheshire and Warrington and reflect policies on equality, diversity and inclusion.

The Board Chair will be invited to take a non-voting position on the Local Authorities Joint Committee.

Reserved places will be held for:

- 1 member from the Local Visitor Economy Partnership
- 3 members from Business Representative Organisations, for example Chambers of Commerce, Federation of Small Business, Business Improvement Districts, Sector organisations etc.

To provide continuity, up to 4 positions will be reserved on the initial Board for former members of the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership Board.

The Board membership will take into account factors including (but not limited to):



- Gender balance
- Sizes of business
- Sectors
- Range of Expertise
- Geographical location
- Business structure (including social enterprise)

Board members will generally be appointed for a 3-year term, although initially appointments will be made for 2 and 3-year terms to provide for staggered future Board renewal. The appointment of former Local Enterprise Partnership members will be for a 1-year period.

Board members may serve a second term through the appointment process

Additionally, the Board will have the ability to co-opt, for periods of up to 12 months, additional members who bring specific subject matter expertise to any matter under investigation by the Board.

Accountability The Board will report on its work to the Local Authorities Joint Committee

The Board and its Members will operate and conduct themselves in accordance with the following principles:

- Code of Conduct - underpinned by the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan principles)
- Attendance - commitment to attending 75% of meetings of the Board
- Support of a fully inclusive culture. Promote and adhere to policies on equality, diversity and inclusivity.
- Declarations of Interest
- Confidential Reporting
- Whistleblowing
- Gifts and Hospitality

On issues of conduct, the Board and its Members are accountable to the Local Authorities Joint Committee

Review The participation and involvement of Board Members will be monitored on a rolling 12-month basis.

Working Approach

The Board is intended to bring insights to the Local Authorities Joint Committee and to identify priority work streams

The Board will seek to influence public and private sector bodies to participate in and deliver those projects identified as priorities.

Board members will also be able to join cross-sector and other 'task groups' working on issues determined by the Board, for example:

- Decarbonisation
- Digitalisation
- Social Value
- Skills

The Board may form sub-groups from its own membership and others, where it deems necessary. Wherever possible, sub-groups should be constituted according to the principles of these Terms of Reference and, in all cases, sub-groups should abide by terms relating to accountability and reflect policies on equality, diversity and inclusion.

The Board will nominate a member as Lead for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

A paragraph of text will be included in papers for submission to the Local Authorities Joint Committee setting out the views of the Board on the issue(s) under consideration.

Meetings

The Board will meet quarterly with the potential for a small number of additional ad hoc meetings during the year.

During its first year of operation, the board will meet at two-monthly intervals

Resources

The Board will be supported by a secretariat function provided through Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington.

Board members would be expected to provide c1-2 days of support per month. Board positions are not remunerated.