

**Birmingham, Coventry and Black Country City Region Board**  
**Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2008 at 11.00 - 12.30,**  
**Birmingham Council House, Committee rooms 3- 4.**

**Present:** Cllr Mike Whitby (Chairman), Cllr Ken Taylor (Coventry), Cllr John O’Hare (Walsall), Cllr Ken Meeson (Solihull), Cllr Neville Patten (Wolverhampton), Cllr David Caunt (Dudley), Cllr Eric Carter [for Cllr Andrew Eade] (Telford & Wrekin), Cllr Bill Thomas (Sandwell), Ben Reid (LSC), Andrew Sparke (Dudley), Stephen Hughes (Birmingham), Mark Rogers (Solihull), Richard Carr (Wolverhampton), Paul Sheehan (Walsall), Shan Williams [for Allison Fraser] (Sandwell), Glyn Pitchford (Business Representative), Peter Wall (Business alternate), James Watkins (Business), Julie Robson [for David Cragg] (LSC), Olwen Dutton (WMRA), John McGuigan (Coventry), Steve Wellings (Telford & Wrekin), Dave Howl (Birmingham), Simon Murphy (City Region Project Director), Paul Toomer (City Region/JCP), Dionne Williams (City Region Policy), John Hunter (City Region Admin).

**Also Present:** Andrew Holdsworth (Birmingham).

**30/08 Apologies for absence**

**Action**

Cllr David Smith (WMRA), Cllr Andrew Eade (Telford & Wrekin), Allison Fraser (Sandwell), Nick Paul (AWM), Jerry Blakett (Chamber), Mark Pearce (AWM), Mike Laverty (AWM), David Cragg (LSC).

The Chairman welcomed Ben Reid from the LSC to the meeting.

**31/08 Item 2 - Notes from AGM 4<sup>th</sup> June 2008**

**Noted**

Notes were received and noted.

**32/08 Item 3 – Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

**33/08 Item 4 – City Region Strategic Options**

**Stephen Hughes** The key points to agree were joint promotion of projects already underway, supporting those at earlier stages of development, and that the Government should be lobbied to approve the City Region as the national pilot for the introduction of Accelerated Development Zones (ADZ).

**The Board unanimously agreed to the recommendations**

**Agreed**

2.1a A lobbying campaign of Government in support of the concept of Accelerated Development Zones (ADZs), and of the City Region being a national pilot area

**Endorsed**

2.1b The issuing of press statements to promote the City Region’s position on ADZs

**Endorsed**

2.2a Identify potential City Region projects that could be supported by ADZs

**Endorsed**

2.2b Identify City Region strategic priority projects for

**Endorsed**

joint promotion and intervention.

**Stephen Hughes** commented that by agreeing to this proposal we were demonstrating what the City Region was all about.

**Peter Wall** asked if we could have a summary of what City Regions around the world had achieved. A list of what has worked and what has not worked.

**Mike Whitby** suggested Dave Howl would be able to produce this information.

**Dave Howl**

**34/08 Item 5 – City Skills and Employment - City Strategy update**

**Julie Robson** highlighted the outcomes to July and how many of the targets had been surpassed which was as a result of the way partners had worked together

**Mike Whitby** stressed that we need to be able to identify the added value of City Region working

**Julie Robson** informed the meeting that the City Strategy would not have worked without the City Region input. This project produced crucial changes in the ways we worked together. Best Practice was passed on, and where areas were weak practices that had been successful in other areas were applied. As a result of this we have been offered a two year extension to City Strategy with additional funding. As a result of our success the Government have asked the West Midlands to trial a new project “Integrated Employment and Skills” which commences on 29<sup>th</sup> September.

Comments from the floor

- This is a good success story that ought to be promoted and publicized
- There continues to be a need to focus on areas where the results are not as good, and on poorer ward areas
- Train to Gain has been included
- The relaxation of the 16 Hour Rule was having benefits in the current economic climate

**The Board unanimously agreed to the recommendation:-**

**5.1 The Board is invited to note progress towards the achievement of the City Region City Strategy targets, and related policy developments.**

**Agreed**

**Mike Whitby** proposed that the success of this project also be included in the Press Release agreed in relation to the Strategic Options above, **this was agreed.**

**Agreed**

**35/08 Item 6 – City Business Community Issues – Glyn Pitchford**

**Glyn Pitchford** circulated papers on Research & Development [R&D] and on Broadband Competitiveness.

The R&D paper was for information purposes to show that Business was keen to develop work with the Universities.

**Stephen Hughes** suggested that Science City representatives make a presentation of the work they are doing to the Board.

**Agreed to request presentation.**

**Glyn Pitchford** made a presentation on Next Generation Broad Band

**John O'Hare** welcomed the presentation and explained that Walsall was well advanced in their plans to develop a Gigaport e.g. fibre optic cables had been laid in the Ring Road.

**Ben Reid** said if the City Region endorsed the Walsall project then he thought that would help get BT on board.

**Ken Taylor** informed the meeting that Coventry had already laid fibre optic around the City. The system installed has 256 cables and gives them enormous potential. However connecting into the Walsall proposal would be beneficial too.

**Mike Whitby** said the Gigaport was a project we could all benefit from which merited further investigation.

**There was general agreement from the floor that a Task and Finish Group should be established to carry out this work and that Paul Sheehan would coordinate this.**

**Agreed**

**36/08 Item 7 - AOB**

**1 Olwen Dutton** said that new proposals for housing growth figures would be known on 7<sup>th</sup> October and this may be something to be considered at the Away Day.

**2 Simon Murphy** informed the Board of the Business and Enterprise Select Committee investigation into RDAs. The Board agreed to submit a response through the Chairman providing that it was also in line with key aspects of the response from the Regional Forum of Leaders

**Agreed**

**3 Stephen Hughes** mentioned that the Chief Executives Steering Group had considered a more united City Region presence at the 2009 MIPIM conference

**It was agreed that Board Members would consider the idea of a shared stand under our City Region banner at MIPIM, and feedback their proposals at their next meeting.**

**Agreed**

**Glyn Pitchford thought that the lead article in the Birmingham Post today was apposite – we should consider**

**accepting Birmingham as the region's capital, changing our name to Greater Birmingham City Region to be better placed to compete with other regions.**

**37/08 Item 8 - Dates of next meetings**

3rd Board Away Day, commencing 1630 Friday 10th and finishing 1300 Saturday 11th October, Studley Castle, Studley, Warwickshire

Date of next meeting - Wednesday 26th November 2008 - 11.00 – 12.30 Rooms 3 & 4, The Council House, Birmingham

The meeting closed at 12.35

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