

Summary Notes and Actions

1. Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1. Christine Gaskell, as meeting chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting. (This meeting is open to all LEP Chairs. Participation is always welcomed and encouraged - including feedback from all Chairs on papers shared with all LEPs in advance of the meeting.)

2. LEP Review - feedback

- 2.1. Before officials from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) joined the meeting, Christine Gaskell gave verbal feedback on the two LEP Review Advisory Panel meetings held to date. (The next meeting is on 5th March, with a fourth one to be arranged.)
- 2.2. Christine has been asking that LEPs receive feedback during this process. Reference was made to the recent [MHCLG summary note](#) sent by Joe Manning to LEP CEOs (and shared in the LEP Network Bulletin #7 on 21st February).
- 2.3. At the first Advisory Panel meeting, Christine was invited to provide some opening remarks. These were drawn from the [LEPs letter to Ministers](#) in December 2017. (For information, Christine's opening remarks are included in Annex 1.)
- 2.4. Christine has also made the request that the LEP Review looks to the positives, to build on the strengths that LEPs have, and to adopt best practice. This has been supported by other Panel members.

3. LEP Review - views from MHCLG

Simon Ridley and Joe Manning from MHCLG joined the meeting.

- 3.1. Simon stressed that **overall LEPs are in a positive and optimistic place**. Government is committed to LEPs driving local economic growth and helping their economies to be as productive and successful as possible. The objective of the LEP Review is a positive one, to help LEPs build their capacity, capability, and profile.
- 3.2. Simon briefly covered the background to the recent **PAC hearing on GCGP**, when concerns were raised by a local MP, leading to the involvement of the National Audit Office. While there was no evidence of any pecuniary advantage benefitted by the Chair, there were areas needing to be addressed, around the confidence in the LEP's leadership and governance.
- 3.3. MHCLG are looking to deepen the **Annual Conversations** to tell the story of LEP transparency and accountability more compellingly. Following the recent letters LEP CEOs received from Stephen Jones, there will be a series of Deep Dives with some LEPs where issues have come to light. This is to understand the issues, see they are being addressed properly, and that the LEP has the right processes in place. MHCLG are looking to have a process in place that will 'stand up', and help LEPs work through any issues.
- 3.4. Government want LEPs to be at the heart of **Local Industrial Strategies**. The Department is seeking to agree longer funding (the two years of core funding and for Growth Hubs is a good start); and for there to be a 'deepening' in support for LEPs across Whitehall.
- 3.5. The **LEP Review** is looking to strengthen government's confidence in LEPs. In MHCLG this is being led by Joe Manning's team, and they are working across Whitehall. There is an external Advisory Panel, which Ministers invited Christine Gaskell to join. It is not the only place where they are having discussions and gathering information, including talking to LEPs in Mayor Combined Authority (MCA) areas and getting their input.

- 3.6. No decisions have been made on the outcomes of the LEP Review. There are important areas emerging with questions on:
 - 3.6.1. possible consistency in structures (Limited Company models);
 - 3.6.2. supporting LEP independence (without needing to rely on local authorities);
 - 3.6.3. some thinking on geographies where some local areas are saying the size of the LEP (too big or too small) or overlaps may be affecting impact (Simon reassured the Chairs that LEPs will know if this is a local issue before anything happens);
 - 3.6.4. how LEPs work in MCA areas and the voice of the private sector LEP.
- 3.7. Government want to come out of the Review with clarity on the role and purpose of LEPs in developing and setting the local economic direction, and identifying the key sectors, directing investment and overseeing delivery.
- 3.8. The timing is currently fluid, looking to bring things together this side of the summer by end May / early June (nothing will be announced before Purdah and local authority elections), to help LEPs as they move on to the development of local Industrial Strategies.
- 3.9. Simon confirmed that MHCLG will share ideas with LEPs before any final decisions are made by Ministers.
- 3.10. When asked about the timeframe MHCLG is looking for LEPs to address areas raised by the Annual Conversations, Simon said they are looking to sign off the funding by the end of March, but want to give LEPs enough time to do things properly and be ahead of any further PAC queries.
- 3.11. When asked about their confidence in the moderation of local Annual Conversations, Simon said they have done a lot more this year to be much more confident, and they are open to hear where this could be improved.
- 3.12. Simon said that the LEP Review will include looking at the **role of the LEP Network**, and what role it could usefully play – and would welcome working on this with LEPs. Simon agreed with the suggestion that some time is used at the LEP workshop on 20th March to discuss this further, and Joe Manning said this would link in well with the LEP Review timing.

ACTION: Warren Ralls

Simon Ridley and Joe Manning from MHCLG left the meeting.

4. Supporting LEPs on Transparency

- 4.1. Warren Ralls confirmed that the LEP Network has been copied into all LEP feedback letters from recent Annual Conversations.
- 4.2. LEP Chairs agreed that Warren should summarise the attributes that MHCLG thought categorised a LEP as “excellent”, and share this with all LEPs.
- 4.3. Reflecting on the above comments from Simon Ridley, Chairs agreed that Warren Ralls should call the LEPs where areas for improvement have been highlighted, to see what help the LEP Network can provide. This could include linking with LEPs considered ‘best in class’.
- 4.4. LEP Chairs agreed that a further piece of work was warranted – a deeper analysis to inform standards, drawn from quality assessment frameworks. If agreed by LEPs at the 20th March workshop, this piece of work would develop into 2018/19.

ACTIONS: Warren Ralls

5. 20th March 2018

- 5.1. Warren Ralls gave an overview of the latest updates to the agenda, external speakers and attendees for the workshop and dinner.
- 5.2. The LEP Network executive will chase final confirmation from LEP attendees yet to accept the calendar invite.

Workshop.

- 5.3. LEP Chairs agreed that there is a 'window of opportunity' to collectively agree how to continue providing Ministers and civil servants with confidence in LEPs.
- 5.4. Warren will work with LEP Chairs to scope out this item for discussion at the LEP Review workshop on 20th March.

Dinner.

- 5.5. Given the level of Ministerial support for LEPs, and the current attention on the LEP Review, LEP Chairs decided that the dinner should be for LEP Chairs only. The invitation is non-transferrable, and cannot be delegated to a vice-Chair or LEP Board member. However, Board Members are welcome to join the earlier workshop with LEP CEOs, and to join the drinks networking after the workshop.
- 5.6. Warren Ralls will decide which Chairs to approach to host the various sessions of the workshop, and deliver the 'LEP message' at the dinner.

ACTIONS: Warren Ralls**6. LEP Network 2018/19**

- 6.1. Given the above discussion, and the timetable for the LEP Review, LEP Chairs decided that the proposed activity for 2018/19, and the 'Ways of Working' should be held for now, and discussed further at the 20th March workshop.
- 6.2. The LEP Network will prepare to invoice LEPs in April 2018.
- 6.3. Chairs asked that future meetings be longer (three hours) to provide enough time to cover the agenda items.

ACTION: Warren Ralls

The meeting closed at 1.10pm.

Future Meeting Dates:

- 11am-6pm Tue. 20th March 2018 - LEP Chair & CEO workshop (County Hall, Westminster).
- 6:30pm-9:30pm Tue. 20th March 2018 - LEP Chair dinner with Ministers & sponsor.
- 11am-2pm Tuesday 10th April 2018.
- 11am-2pm Tuesday 29th May 2018.
- 11am-2pm Tuesday 17th July 2018.
- 11am-2pm Tuesday 11th September 2018.
- 11am-2pm Tuesday 4th December 2018.
- 11am-2pm Tuesday 22nd January 2019.
- 11am-2pm Tuesday 26th March 2019.

Meeting Attendees:

Local Enterprise Partnerships (alphabetical, by LEP):

- Christine Gaskell MBE DL (Chair, Cheshire & Warrington LEP) - *meeting Chair*.
- Peter Richardson OBE (Chair, D2N2).
- Steve Hindley CBE DL (Chair, Heart of the South West LEP).
- Roger Marsh OBE (Chair, Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership).
- Angus Knowles-Cutler (Deputy Chair, London Economic Action Partnership).
- Dr Ann Limb CBE DL (Chair, South East Midlands LEP).
- Peter Read (Chair, Thames Valley Berkshire LEP).
- Dr Graham Wynn OBE (Chair, The Marches).

Government officials:

- Simon Ridley, Director General, MHCLG.
- Joe Manning, Deputy Director, CLoG (Cities & Local Growth Unit).

LEP Network Executive:

- Warren Ralls, Director.
- Jayne Atkinson, Administration Executive.

Apologies:

- Paul Booth (Chair, North East LEP).

Annex 1 - Christine Gaskell's opening remarks

LEP Review Advisory Panel - first meeting (11th December)

I, and all LEP Chairs welcome this review. It is timely as we begin to develop the local industrial strategies which we see as a confirmation of Government's strong commitment to LEPs.

We can always improve, and we will welcome fresh ideas, but it is important that we don't only look at negatives – this is always the easiest thing to do. We need to look at best practice and ways we can replicate this across the Network. One good example is growth hubs: it was great that the budget confirmed future funding for growth hubs and we have state of the art operations in LEPs in Gloucestershire and Liverpool, for example. We need to mirror this elsewhere. Indeed the 11 Northern LEPs are already developing a blueprint for growth hubs based on this shared best practice.

The voice of the private sector is vital. We have taken, and will consistently take, tough decisions and will say 'no' to projects that don't result in improved economic outcomes. But how do we engage better with the private sector? The Prime Minister wishes to meet with LEP Chairs twice a year, so we need the business representative groups, many of whom are here, to tell us what more we can do and how we can work better with you to get that important private sector voice.

It is also important to remember the 'P' in LEPs – it stands for partnership with local authorities. We are in this together to enable us to deliver the economic agenda in tandem.

We are encouraged by the strong support we have received from Government. The local industrial strategies need to be ambitious and supported by all quarters, public and private, and all government departments.

Finally, we understand the responsibilities we carry for the public funding under our management. Our governance must be robust and fit for purpose. But to meet these expectations we need adequate and certain funding. I am looking forward to our discussions.