
NORTH WALES ECONOMIC AMBITION BOARD 18/10/19

Present:

Voting Members - Councillors:- Hugh Evans (Denbighshire Council), Llinos Medi Huws (Isle of Anglesey County Council), Ian Roberts (Flintshire Council), Sam Rowlands (Conwy County Borough Council) and Dyfrig L.Siencyn (Gwynedd Council) (Chair).

Advisors – Dafydd Evans (Grŵp Llandrillo Menai), Maria Hinfelaar (Glyndwr University), Bryn Jones (Bangor University), Jim Jones (North Wales Mersey Dee Business Council) and Askar Sheibani (Business Delivery Board).

Chief Officers - Annwen Morgan (Isle of Anglesey County Council), Iwan Davies (Conwy County Borough Council), Andrew Farrow (Flintshire Council), Graham Boase (Denbighshire Council), Steve Bayley (Wrexham Council) and Dilwyn Williams (Gwynedd Council).

Officers in attendance - Dafydd Edwards (Statutory Finance Officer), Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer), Jane Richardson (Chair of the Executive Officers Group) and Eirian Roberts (Democratic Services Officer).

Jane Richardson, Chair of the Executive Officers Group, was welcomed to the meeting and thanked for taking over the reins temporarily.

1. APOLOGIES

Councillor Mark Pritchard (Wrexham County Borough Council), Professor Iwan Davies (Bangor University), David Jones (Coleg Cambria), Colin Everett (Flintshire Council), Judith Greenhalgh (Denbighshire Council) and Ian Bancroft (Wrexham Council).

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

3. URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

4. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meetings of the NWEAB held on 6 and 20 September 2019 as a true record.

5. UPDATE ON THE NWEAB WORK PROGRAMME AND PROGRAMME OFFICE PREMISES

The report was submitted by Jane Richardson, Chair of the Executive Officers Group.

RESOLVED

- 1. To accept the report on the Work Programme subject to reviewing and updating the RAG status of each task within the Work Programme by the next meeting, and asking the Executive Officers Group to review the format of the table when the Programme Director is in post.**

2. **To confirm the intention to re-advertise the post of Chair of the Business Delivery Board.**
3. **To approve the Transitional Plan.**
4. **To authorise the Accountable Body to enter into a lease of the premises at Conwy Business Centre in accordance with the report and to agree other terms on the basis of advice from the Accountable Body's Head of Property Department, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer.**

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

Update progress of the Work Programme tasks and ensure that the table content is clearer. Report on the Transitional Plan as a supporting document to the Work Programme until the Programme Director had started in post.

The NWEAB needed to identify a suitable office space for the Programme Office.

DISCUSSION

Further to preparing the report, the Chair of the Executive Officers Group noted that both the UK and Welsh Governments were now happy with the Heads of Terms and were awaiting confirmation around arrangements to formally sign the Heads of Terms. A press release had been drafted and an internal press release was also being prepared.

During the discussion the following matters were raised:

- The Leader of Flintshire Council noted that he had not been invited to the first meeting of the Transport sub-group.
- The Chief Executive of Gwynedd Council noted that a sufficient pool of candidates had not been received for the post of Chair of the Business Delivery Board. It was recommended that the post be re-advertised, and to notify the original candidates that their applications would still be considered. It was agreed to review the advertisement and the information about the role to ensure that they hit the right note. The importance of appointing a leader who was well-known in the area and regionally was stressed, and it was suggested that a discussion be held with the Chair of the Shadow Board to see how best to attract candidates. The business community was encouraged to promote this opportunity also.
- It was noted that the officers were aiming to submit the Business Plan for ESF funding to WEFO by 31 October, but it was asked what would happen should Britain leave the European Union on that date. The Chair of the Executive Officers Group was asked to discuss this with her colleagues at Conwy Council who specialised on Brexit matters.
- Concern was expressed that the private sector did not understand the timeframe and, although they were ready to start their plans, they were unable to develop the five case business models for the Growth Deal projects until the Heads of Terms had been signed formally. It was noted that the delay had been caused by both Governments and that the North Wales Growth Deal had faced more obstacles than other deals in other regions. It was emphasised that the message regarding the timeframe needed to be communicated to the business community and the Chair of the Executive Officers Group agreed to include a note to that effect in the press release.
- It was noted that the information on the columns of the table noting the progress on the various plans in the work programme was ambiguous and a request was made for the format of the document to be reviewed and, possibly, to set it out in more of a narrative format. It was agreed to pass on this comment to the Executive Group.

- It was noted that the work programme did not refer to the process following the signing of the Heads of Terms and that it would be beneficial to know what the timeframe was over the next 12 months.
- Concerns were expressed about the gaps in the National Development Framework which was out to consultation by Welsh Government at present, and it was agreed to include the matter on the agenda of the Board meeting on 15 November.
- It was suggested that the Transitional Plan was more of a work plan than a transitional plan. It was explained that the document would evolve to be a work plan in due course, but that it would only be in use for a few months.

6. REVENUE BUDGET 2019-20 - SECOND QUARTER REVIEW (SEPTEMBER 2019)

The report was submitted by Dafydd Edwards, Statutory Finance Officer of the Host Authority.

RESOLVED

- 1. To receive the Joint Committee's (North Wales Economic Ambition Board) Second Quarter Review for 2019/20.**
- 2. To obtain the Joint Committee's approval for the budget virements set out in the last column of Appendix 1.**
- 3. To note and accept the present position on the 2020/21 Budget.**

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

There was reduced forecast expenditure on project planning (less work commissioned externally and lower cost of employing staff) than originally estimated, but it appeared that capitalisation of salaries would not now be possible in 2019/20. The consequent net expenditure of the NWEAB was affordable within the current partner contributions, but was dependent on obtaining the ESF grant funding from WEFO.

7. REGIONAL BUSINESS SUPPORT

The report, as well as a PowerPoint presentation, was submitted by Jane Richardson, Chair of the Executive Officers Group.

RESOLVED to accept that the preparatory work continues as outlined in the report but, in the meantime, send a message to the Minister for Economy and Transport expressing that the proposed model does not meet the needs of the private sector in North Wales.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The business community wished to see one delivery body for North Wales and the proposed model did not comply with the aspirations of the region's businesses.

DISCUSSION

During the discussion, the following matters were raised:

- The importance of engaging with the private sector and not repeat past mistakes was stressed.
- Several members expressed concern that the proposed model did not comply with the aspirations of the region's businesses, who wished to see one delivery body for North Wales. It was noted that there was a need to be far more adventurous and ambitious and invest in a more suitable model. It appeared that the Minister did not want that, but it was stressed that he should be challenged on that. It was agreed to

send a message to the Minister expressing that the proposed model did not meet the needs of the private sector in North Wales. In the meantime, it was accepted that the preparatory work outlined in the report should proceed.

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 2.50 pm

CHAIRMAN