



## MINUTES OF CUMBRIA LEP SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING

**20<sup>th</sup> June 2017, Dodd & Co, Carlisle**

**Present:** Chris Holmes (chair), David Beeby, Martin Ward, David Moore, Heather Bradley, Graham Vincent, Suzanne Caldwell (minutes), Rob Wadsworth (S4W) Brian Holdsworth (S4W)

**Apologies:** None

### 1. LEP REVIEW

This was a one topic meeting to discuss the LEP review. Chris re-capped on the review, including process and progress to date. By agreement, the public sector members of the Scrutiny Panel had not been included up to this point because of conflict of interest.

Rob updated on progress to date. S4W have met with a good number of stakeholders from the list provided, with good geographic spread and public/private split and have been concentrating on meeting local stakeholders first. They will be looking at how other LEPs are dealing with some of the issues facing Cumbria and seeking to identify what works well. However Cumbria is one of the few LEPs with a single upper tier authority and is small, even compared with other rural LEPs. They are reviewing relevant documentation on governance, the SEP, etc.

He emphasised that the focus is on structure and organisations, not personalities and highlighted the key areas they plan to look at in more detail:

- Strategic objectives, how can the SEP best be refreshed in the light of changes since its production, including activities all organisations can get behind.
- Dealing more effectively with issues around transparency and conflicts – budget setting, budget process, where organisations are strategic/delivery partners, where organisations putting funding in/getting funding from the LEP, where organisations are both partners and beneficiaries.
- Executive capacity of the LEP and how to enable it to build structural capacity rather than use secondees etc.

They are now starting to arrange meetings with ex board members and need to talk with these and the rest of the other key stakeholders plus look at the experiences of relevant LEPs and begin to put together a draft report. They want to keep an open mind on conclusions at this stage as it is very much a work in progress.

Chris highlighted that corporate governance is the major issue for stakeholders he has spoken with, including pre-agreed decisions and decisions being made and then the agreed action stopped.



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There is a need to examine the direct relationship between the Board/LEP and County Council who are accountable body. The County Council should only be undertaking the accountable body function not acting as the authoritative body.

There was some discussion of LEPs becoming limited companies, which will be part of the consideration. The short term nature of funding is an issue. Setting up a limited company does not in itself give more longevity of contracting. S4W highlighted that in some areas other bodies are taking the exposure of potential redundancies so LEPs can contract roles longer term (e.g. the Chamber in the East Midlands and the County Council in Lancashire). S4W have been told that the LEP has largely the same level of resourcing now as it had when it started. It was pointed out that to them that this is not the case. There are added difficulties of uncertainty in light of general election, impacting on contracting and on making decisions about future structure and direction. S4W will try to take soundings/cognisance from MPs on government thinking on the way forward for LEPs and hopefully there will be something in the Queens Speech.

The potential for/value of working with other adjacent LEPs was raised. S4W highlighted the Importance of getting it right internally first. It is then easy to have external conversations because you are speaking from strength and credibility. So they advise concentrating on getting it right within Cumbria first.

The issue of the Districts not all being permanently represented on the Board but operating in pairs was raised. The Districts would be happy to see three more public and three more private members on the Board, which would also allow broader private sector coverage. However there are some concerns over the effectiveness of a significantly expanded Board. It was confirmed that S4W have a copy of the document produced by the Districts setting out all of their issues.

The need to look not just at what happens at the Board but also what happens outside it was flagged. Also the need to make sure any good points are picked up.

Intended timescales are for a draft "final" report to be with the Scrutiny Panel for review and discussion by the end of July and present to the LEP in September, providing the Scrutiny Panel is happy with the report by then. If there is a need to extend timescales to get the report right then this will be done. If any recommendations are not implemented then the LEP will need to explain to the Scrutiny Panel why not.

Rob highlighted that from discussions so far there appears to be a strong appetite for change, although views on what change there should be vary.

## **2. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed that Chris would put forward some dates for an August meeting. David M will be away for two weeks from the 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Action: CH/SYC**



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