
NORTH WALES ECONOMIC AMBITION BOARD 16/06/23

Present:

Voting Members - Councillors:- Jason McLellan (Denbighshire Council), Llinos Medi Huws (Isle of Anglesey County Council), Mark Pritchard (Wrexham County Borough Council), Ian Roberts (Flintshire Council), Charlie McCoubrey (Conwy County Borough Council) and Dyfrig Siencyn (Cyngor Gwynedd) (Chair).

Advisors – Dr Maria Hinfelaar (Wrexham University), Askar Sheibani (Business Delivery Board) and Edmund Burke (Bangor University).

Chief Officers - Dylan Williams (Isle of Anglesey County Council), Sarah Ecob (Conwy County Borough Council), Neal Cockerton (Flintshire Council), Dafydd Gibbard (Cyngor Gwynedd) and Richard Weigh (Wrexham County Borough Council).

Officers in attendance - Dewi Morgan (Statutory Finance Officer - Host Authority), Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer - Host Authority), Alwen Williams (Portfolio Director), Hedd Vaughan-EVans (Head of Operations), Nia Medi Williams (Senior Operations Officer), David Matthews (Land and Property Programme Manager), Robyn Lovelock (Growth Deal Programme Manager) and Eirian Roberts (Democracy Services Officer - Host Authority)

Observers - Dewi Williams (Welsh Government) and Gareth Ashman (UK Government)

1. CHAIR

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn as Chair for 2023/24.

2. VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Mark Pritchard as Vice-chair for 2023/2024.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Dafydd Evans (Grŵp Llandrillo Menai), Rhun ap Gareth (Conwy County Borough Council), with Sarah Ecob delegating for him, Ian Bancroft (Wrexham County Borough Council) with Richard Weigh delegating for him, and Graham Boase (Denbighshire Council).

The Chairman welcomed the deputies to the meeting.

4. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

5. URGENT ITEMS

No urgent matters were raised.

6. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 24 March 2023, as a true record, subject to correcting two references to '*Common Prosperity Fund*' in the English version of item 8 (Portfolio Management Office Resourcing) to read '*Shared Prosperity Fund*'.

7. ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director, set out the context, noting:-

- That the purpose of the Annual Review was to inform stakeholders and the wider public regarding the current position of the North Wales Growth Deal, and the progress made during the past year, in a more accessible way at the end of the financial year, compared to the more scheduled way of providing quarterly updates.
- That it had been a fairly challenging year, with many changes to some of the projects and the Portfolio in its entirety, but that this had led us to further opportunities over the course of the current year, and for coming years.

Hedd Vaughan-Evans (Head of Operations) the presented a series of slides outlining the highlights of the year.

RESOLVED

- 1. To note the Annual Report for 2022-23.**
- 2. To approve the submission of the Annual Report for 2022-23 to Welsh Government and UK Government as well as the local authority scrutiny committees.**

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

Quarterly and annual reporting on progress against the North Wales Growth Deal is one of the requirements of the Final Deal Agreement. Following the North Wales Economic Ambition Board's consideration, the reports would be shared with Welsh Government, UK Government as well as the local authority scrutiny committees.

DISCUSSION

The Portfolio Director and the team were thanked for their hard work behind the scenes. It was noted that it had not been an easy year, but satisfaction with the pace of the work was expressed, as well as a hope that the projects would start to come to fruition very shortly.

The report was praised, and it was noted that it was impossible to express in words the challenges faced over the course of the past year in terms of maturing the projects. Nevertheless, it was suggested that this had been one of the best years in terms of progress, although maybe not everyone saw that, and it was emphasised that the report needed to be presented in a positive light, with the real challenges explained. The Ambition North Wales team and the external organisations and everyone who had contributed to the success of this year were thanked.

It was noted that one of the biggest challenges faced was bureaucracy, which held projects back, and it was suggested that if there was more autonomy within the Portfolio Management Office, that some decisions could be made sooner, in close collaboration with the Business Delivery Board. It was further noted that there were excellent projects that were much broader than the Growth Deal happening in North Wales, which had the potential of transforming the region if the bureaucracy from Welsh Government partly, and UK Government and also possibly local authorities, could be removed.

The Chair noted that this was an important message for the private sector to send to the Governments and local government, and he thanked Askar Sheibani and members of the Business Delivery Board for their perseverance as they faced the bureaucracy that this Board also faced, and for their work supporting the work of the Ambition Board.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 10.25 am

CHAIR