



LEP Overview and Scrutiny

Date: Tuesday, 27 February 2024

Time: 10.30 am

Location: Cumbria House, 117 Botchergate, Carlisle,
CA1 1RD

Present: Cllr J Ghayouba (Chair), Cllr J Perry (Vice-Chair), Cllr B Pegram, Cllr A Semple, Cllr H Tucker, Cllr S Stoddart and Cllr T Allison (substitute for Cllr M Johnson).

Also Present LEP Chief Executive

In Attendance Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny)
Director of Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport and Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny)

LEP.9/24 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cyril Weber and Mike Johnson and Lord Inglewood (Chair of LEP).

LEP.10/24 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest received.

LEP.11/24 Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED - that the press and public not be excluded from the meeting for any items of business on this occasion.

LEP.12/24 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting held on 21 July 2023.

LEP.13/24 Draft Delivery Plan 2023/24

The LEP Chief Executive opened by offering Lord Inglewood's apologies as unfortunately he had not been able to join the meetings, due to technology issues.

She then provided the Committee with an overview of the report, highlighting the three key themes of governance, strategy, and delivery. Members were updated on several pieces of strategy work, including the Cumbria Transport Infrastructure Plan (CTIP) Synthesis, the rural sector transformation workstreams and the Nutrient Neutrality (NN) study, which Cumbria was being particularly badly affected by.

A Member asked about the future of the careers and enterprise programme as well as whether World at Work was run by the LEP. The LEP Chief Executive advised that the careers and enterprise work would continue following the transfer of functions as this contracted activity was

continuing. The LEP had confirmed that it would provide the match funding for this academic year at which point further match funding would need to be considered by Local Government colleagues. A question was raised on the World at Work.

A Member queried what potential solutions to NN were being worked on and whether an updated version of the list of businesses within the Innovating for Success Programme could be provided with their location (Cumberland or Westmorland & Furness (W&F)) included.

On Nutrient Neutrality, the LEP Chief Executive explained that solutions are still being discussed with the relevant consultants, with concerns highlighted regarding the economic impact of houses not being built, the numbers of houses being delayed and the need for these in terms declining population and the ambition for attracting growth. She agreed to forward the report, once finalised.

Turning to Innovating for Success, the LEP Chief Executive agreed to send through the updated list of business but noted that this open competition programme had secured more interest from outside of Cumberland. This was not indicative of other investment programmes, including Growth Deal, which were evenly distributed.

A Member noted that two important land-based sectors, Hill Sheep Farming and Pig Farming, had not been included within the report. The LEP Chief Executive assured the Board that LEP's Rural Sector Panel, which is co-chaired by the National Farmers Union (NFU) regional directors, was looking at all issues within the wider community and their needs. It was also commented that there were three transformation workstreams as part of the Rural Sector Panel's work programme, which was looking at new opportunities for the area, new markets, changes in farming and sustainable farming, with the need for pragmatic sustainability and possible participation in the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) programme, which CLEP would fund.

A Member asked about the concerns the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) were asked to consider, regarding the implementation of plan-making reforms, whether the housing target included within the report was set by LEP or Cumbria and decarbonising the logistics sector would be undertaken by Cumberland or the LEP. The LEP Chief Executive advised that she would share a copy of the LEP's response to the DLUHC consultation on Plan Making Reforms, adding that the LEP's concerns were regarding capacity for making those changes happen and the pace of delivery due to the national issue of struggling to attract planners.

On the housing target, the LEP Chief Executive clarified that it was taking the targets from Local Plans or standard methodology. Cumbria was not delivering numbers in line with either the UK or the wider North West. It was therefore important that the issues around NN which impact house building were resolved.

Regarding decarbonising the logistics sector, the LEP Chief Executive explained that discussions were ongoing as to who would be responsible for taking forward this work, once the study was complete.

RESOLVED that the progress on implementing the CLEP Delivery Plan (Annex A) in 2023/24 be noted.

LEP.14/24 Skills Bootcamp Update

The LEP Chief Executive provided the Committee with an overview of the report, noting the LEP's focus on incorporating decarbonisation and Net Zero into every skill area and job role.

The report highlighted that Wave 3 (2022/23) of the Skills Bootcamps performed well, despite the slow start, to provide a good foundation year. Then Wave 4 (2023/24) provided a strong performance, leading to the Government increasing funding, which was further increased for Wave 5 (2024/25) due to the performance from the previous year. The LEP Chief Executive also advised members that the Local Energy Hub had received funding of £100,000 for the Retrofit Programme, with the delivery deadline date of 31 March 2024.

A Member commented on the importance naming and marketing of projects such as 'Skills Bootcamp' to show who the projects are aimed towards, which the LEP Chief Executive noted was fixed as this was DfE's brand name for the programme and as such was a contractual obligation and that it now had brand traction with businesses, training providers and colleges. She added that conversations were ongoing with businesses to improve employer engagement.

A Member queried how the need for skills and knowledge is fed back into the education department and how primary schools are involved. The LEP Chief Executive explained that there was a mechanism in place with each Local Authority and the LEP's People, Employment and Skills Strategy Group to provide a comprehensive labour market analysis, which included the skills requirements. This was then fed into the appropriate officers within schools and the bootcamps. The LEP Chief Executive also explained that, although the Bootcamps had a national menu of what could be provided, there was opportunities for the LEP to tailor 30% of the menu to specific needs in response to current and future labour market trends/needs.

In terms of the availability of careers education at primary level. The LEP Chief Executive advised that the current funding from the Careers and Enterprise Company covered only secondary education but there was consideration of extending activity to primary schools. She was also aware that some organisations were already providing support to primary schools and agreed to provide further information on this. The LEP Chief Executive added that the LEP had been looking to work with other partners to better co-ordinate careers events, including those held by MPs, to maximise attendance and minimise the input required by businesses.

A Member asked for further information regarding the Retrofit Programme, specifically what was 'CPD training', what was 'testing training' and whether the programme would deliver its targets by the deadline date. The LEP Chief Executive explained that 'CPD' stood for Continuous Professional Delivery and that 'testing training' related to making sure that individuals who had completed the retrofit training had delivered on the requirements of their employers. Regarding the deadline, despite the fact that it was a late contract, the LEP Chief Executive was confident that the deadline could be met, and the project deliverables achieved.

A Member commented on the finances of the Skills Bootcamps, noting that there was an underspend (especially for Wave 3), querying whether the underspend would be carried over to the next wave, why some big businesses were not paying for training themselves and the future of the Skills Bootcamps. The LEP Chief Executive explained that the finances related to a number of variables, which meant that the focus was on the delivery of outcomes rather than spending all the allocated funding. The Wave 3 underspend was transferred to wave 4 but was also used to cover the running costs, most of which would be drawn down by the end of the financial year. The LEP Chief Executive also highlighted that Wave 3 was the fourth best performing Skills Bootcamp in the country, with Wave 4 the best performing on starts, based on the latest data one point, so big businesses want to use the training available. For the future, the key success is based on learner outcomes, and it would be beneficial to budget appropriately, including the monthly payments via an Annex C.

RESOLVED that,

- a) The progress in delivering Wave 3, Wave 4 and preparing for Wave 5 Skills Bootcamps activity be noted.
- b) The activity that CLEP is undertaking to support 'green' skills be noted.

*[The Board agreed to a 10-minute comfort break. Councillor Tucker left the meeting at 11:33 due to attendance being required at another meeting]
dance being required at another meeting]*

LEP.15/24 Net Zero Update

The LEP Chief Executive provided the Committee with an overview of the report, highlighting decarbonisation and clean energy, noting the funding from North West Net Zero Hub and the vulnerability of Cumbria to climate change, going forward.

A Member queried whether Project Collette were receptive to help and support from the LEP, to which the LEP Chief Executive explained that the team had participated in productive conversations, highlighting the issues with feasibility, resolving issues and the need to be able to answer those questions for the project to move forward. Noting that LEP were also happy to help with finding funding and support regarding the feasibility issues. The LEP Chief Executive commented that no recent response had been received in relation to the advice given.

A Member queried whether the two applications for battery storage near the grid and the potential relaxation of planning to allow for more onshore turbines would help with grid capacity issues. The LEP Chief Executive noted that the battery storage would be a helpful mechanism and that they would speak to their team to see what the impact would be for grid capacity.

Regarding the onshore turbines, the LEP Chief Executive noted that, as the planning authority, it would be up to Local Government to approve onshore wind, but that the LEP would advocate for the most appropriate technologies in appropriate places that would be suitable and sustainable. This was important if commitments to net zero were to be delivered.

A Member asked about the ongoing conversations with Electricity North West and queried the reasons as to why Cumberland missed out on nuclear opportunities such as Moorside. The LEP Chief Executive noted that Electricity North West was responsible for the grid up to one MW until the responsibility was transferred to the National Grid, which the LEP was also working with regarding a capacity assessment. It was noted that Cumbria generates more electricity than it consumes, so a bespoke provision to increase the capacity available had been included in Electricity North West's business plan, should there be a new nuclear development. But projects would need to be in place before capacity was increased. Regarding the missed opportunities, the LEP Chief Executive noted that for Moorside, although the initial development had been agreed, it came down to the investors and international finances. For the Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production (STEP) project, although Cumbria made the final shortlist, the decision considered numerous issues such as connectivity, land, restrictions, and access to the labour market, which ultimately led the UKAEA to deciding not to choose Cumbria. And, for the Small Module Reactor (SMR) national competition, there has been no official outcome released, with the Teesside SMR creation being agreed with a private company and not the government.

A Member asked if there was anything that Cumberland W&F should consider when transferring the functions of LEP. The LEP Chief Executive highlighted the importance of selling Cumbria on a national stage, repositioning Cumbria to the 'Heart of the UK' and noting that Cumbria is self-contained, with 96% living and working in the county. The LEP Chief Executive also pressed the importance of the two councils continuing to operate as one economic functioning area, as a shared and joint endeavour.

RESOLVED that,

- a) The report and ongoing activities in support of moving towards Net Zero be noted.
- b) CLEP's relationship with Project Colette be noted.

LEP.16/24 Integration of Local Enterprise Partnership Activities to Local Authorities

The Director of Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport provided the Committee with an overview of the report, highlighting the creation of the Economic Growth Board (EGB), the programme of integration and what the future will look like including the next steps in the process through the Joint Executive Committee (JEC) to further provide governance. It was also noted that, since the report had been published, a change had been made, with Cumberland taking over the responsibility of being the accountable body and of staff under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (TUPE), with assurance being provided by W&F.

A Member queried if there were any financial implications if the process fit within the Cumberland budget and how staff could be brought to Cumberland under TUPE with the recruitment freeze. The Director of Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport noted that there were no initial financial implications, with the integration of activities covered in the budget, though time would tell if that would change, and that core funding had been applied for. Regarding staff, the Director of Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport noted that the LEP staff coming to Cumberland are fully funded and therefore do not impact the recruitment freeze and that this difference would be explained to all staff members.

A Member noted the importance and challenges of cross border/joint working moving forward which the Director of Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport echoed, highlighting that the work needed to be undertaken on the functional economic area, which was Cumbria, and that a good relationship with the LEP Board, JEC and EGB was key to adding value and for continuity.

A Member noted that the Cumberland Executive did not have a Portfolio Holder who focused on farming, despite the strategic focus on healthy food, and queried if more could be done to reach Cumberland businesses to involve them in projects. The LEP Chief Executive noted that there had only been one project, Innovation for Success, which had less engagement from Cumberland businesses and that all other projects were equal between the two authorities. The Director of Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport highlighted that farming, and the natural sector are a priority that is underrepresented, though Members would be best placed to speak to the Executive regarding Portfolio Holder responsibilities.

A Member queried whether the transitional costs of integrating LEP activities, in addition to the transitional costs of Local Government Reorganization (LGR) was beneficial. The Director of Place, Sustainable Growth and Transport noted that up to £240,000 could be applied for annually and that the transitional costs from the integration of LEP activities were not the risk, but rather the timing and speed to receive funds from the government were the risk to the councils.

Members noted the need for sufficient funding to deliver LEP projects with secondment resources, with the need for private sector engagement, and the risks around timings. Members also noted the agreement to review the Executive arrangements and for further communication to be sent out to council staff regarding the budget and TUPE of LEP staff.

RESOLVED that the activity to integrate LEP activities to Local Authorities for Cumberland and Westmorland and Furness Councils, and comments made by the Committee on the activities, be noted.

[Councillor Stoddart left at 12:50]

LEP.17/24 Future of LEP Overview & Scrutiny

The Scrutiny Officer provided the Committee with an overview of the position of LEP Overview and Scrutiny going forward, with any joint work done by the JEC to be scrutinised by the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) and work pertaining to Cumberland to be scrutinised by the Business & Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee (BROSC).

The Committee agreed that, moving forward, the work of scrutinising the LEP activity integration had been distributed appropriately and therefore there was no reason for the LEP Overview and Scrutiny Board to continue into 2024/25.

The Chair took this moment to thank the LEP Chief Executive for all their work and the information provided to the Committee, the Scrutiny Officer for their support and the Members of the Board for their hard work.

The Vice Chair also took a moment to thank the Chair for the work they had done.

RESOLVED that the Cumberland LEP Overview and Scrutiny Board cease to exist from 2024/25 as their responsibilities are distributed to the JOSC and BROSC appropriately.

The meeting finished at 12.55 pm