

Board Summary March 2017

The board members received training from Ashfords about their roles and responsibilities as the LEP continues to improve its transparency, accountability and processes. Their remit is to promote the successes of the HotSW area, exercise independent judgement and avoid conflicts of interest.

A presentation to the board was made on behalf of the University Centre Somerset (currently part of Bridgwater and Taunton College) which outlined the FE and HE partnership's aspirations to establish a university in Somerset to further improve the training and higher level skills provision in the HotSW area. The board is supportive of the initiative and emphasised that education establishment must work closely with employers to ensure that the needs of business are met to enable the local workforce to take up higher level jobs.

At the board away-day last month, the directors re-addressed the role of the LEP in line with the new Productivity Plan which will eventually replace the Strategic Economic Plan. The Board agreed that key areas for focus are skills, helping develop the management capabilities in our businesses and the underpinning infrastructure our area need to compete. In delivering these the Board was clear that economic benefits need to be felt across the area. We need to maximise HotSW's natural capital; target key sectors for growth; develop wider regional partnerships on key issues and opportunities such as science and innovation, housing for keyworkers and energy grid capacity; and there is a clear need to create a distinctive economy. The Board is fully supportive of moves to create a wider south west identity to along the lines of other UK regions and so attract investment and address cross-area strategic issues.

The board approved the recommendation to appoint eight new non-executive directors with specific areas of expertise that will help the LEP achieve its organisational aims. The new directors will take up their positions after the end of May when the terms of office for a number of the LEP's existing NEDs come to an end.