

**Draft Minutes of HotSW LEP CIC Board Meeting**

**28 January 2022**

**9.30 – 12.00 noon**

**Via MS Teams**

**Board Attendees:**

Cllr David Hall - Cabinet Member for Resources and Economic Development, Somerset County Council (DH)  
Jane Dumeresque – Non-Exec Director (JD)  
John Laramy CBE - Principal & CEO, Exeter College (JL)  
Prof. Judith Petts CBE– Vice-Chancellor & Chief Executive, University of Plymouth (JPetts)  
Karl Tucker – Chair HotSW LEP and Managing Director, Yeo Valley Properties Ltd (KT)  
Prof Lisa Roberts – Vice-Chancellor, University of Exeter (LR)  
Melanie Squires MBE – SW Regional Director, NFU (MS)  
Paul Coles – CEO, SWBC (PColes)  
Paul Crawford – Chief Executive, LiveWest (PCrawford)  
Cllr Phil Bialyk – Leader, Exeter City Council (PB)  
Richard Stevens – Managing Director, Go South West (RS)  
Cllr Rufus Gilbert -Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills, Devon County Council (RG) until 11.40am  
Stuart Brocklehurst – Chief Executive, Applegate (SB)  
Cllr Swithin Long, Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Tourism & Housing, Torbay Council alternate for Cllr Steve Darling (SL)  
Tracey Lee – Chief Executive, Plymouth City Council as alternate for Cllr Nick Kelly (TL)  
Cllr Val Keitch – Leader, South Somerset Council until 11.20am (VK)  
Vince Flower – Non-Exec Director (VF)

**Officers in attendance:**

Claire Gibson – Head of Delivery, HotSW LEP (CG)  
David Ralph – Chief Executive, HotSW LEP (CG)  
Eifion Jones – COO, HotSW LEP (EJ)  
Jane Portman – Chief Executive, South Somerset Council accompanying Cllr Val Keitch until 11.20am (JPortman)  
Keri Denton - Head of Economy & Enterprise, Devon County Council, accompanying Cllr Rufus Gilbert (KD)  
Kevin Mowat – Director of Place, Torbay Council, accompanying Cllr Swithin Long (KM)  
Paul Hickson - Strategic Commissioning Manager – Economy and Planning, Somerset County Council, accompanying Cllr David Hall (PH)

**Others in attendance**

Anne Marie Morris, MP representing Devon MPs (AMM)  
Ben Bradshaw, MP representing Devon MPs until 11.30am (BB)  
Janet Powell – Executive Assistant, HotSW LEP (for minutes) (JPowell)



local enterprise partnership

iii) **Presentation slides from Prof Matt Lobley, the University of Exeter on the Public Sector Food Procurement Report**

MS introduced Professor Matt Lobley from the University of Exeter, who attended the meeting to present the findings and recommendations of the University of Exeter's research into public sector food procurement in the South West, funded by the LEP together with the NFU, Devon and Somerset County Councils, and CIOs LEP. ML began by informing the Board that he attended the recent launch of Defra's new UK Agricultural Partnership which brought together academics and other stakeholders, with an almost full ministerial team present indicating its importance. He highlighted recent research findings on the health and well being of the farming community, with above the norm poor mental health, depression and anxiety and said this meant farmers were not in a good place to be able to process information and advice that would affect their decision making in respect to their businesses and family. He, therefore, expressed his support for the comprehensive business advisory service that was being proposed by the LEPs.

ML proceeded to run through the slides explaining the public sector food procurement research, the challenges they had faced trying to access data, the research findings and recommendations. At the end, feedback was invited on the report to- Tim Wilkinson [t.j.wilkinson@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:t.j.wilkinson@exeter.ac.uk)

Feedback from the Board as follows:-

- It would be good to keep reinforcing the health benefits derived from quality food.
- To showcase the company in the slide presentation that was able to buy 70% of its food locally and use this as an exemplar to others – however, unfortunately, all the participants were guaranteed anonymity. If more in-depth work could be done perhaps it's worth going back to share best practice.
- Suppliers frequently refuse to engage in public sector contracts as they are too cumbersome and some will increase prices to cover the cost implications of engaging in the procurement process. Some public sector procurement officers ask to exclude any supplier that hasn't previously procured with the public sector and this discourages local buying and innovation. The outcome of the December 2020 Transforming Public Procurement Consultation provided a legal basis for the increased use of freedoms and flexibilities and prioritised local buying but some in the public sector are unaware of this. Within the HotSW area one Local Authority (LA) only spends 7% within its council boundaries and this clearly represents a great opportunity.
- With a number of public bodies pulling together action plans for how to reach their carbon reduction targets perhaps the LEP could assist by completing this section of the road map for them in a way that is both simple and straightforward. This could be replicated for private organisations i.e Visit Devon and their members thereby speeding up the process.
- The Dept of Education (DoE) is currently drafting a sustainable action plan for all educational institutes from early years through to Universities. JPetts is on the user group and will seek to pick up this up with them with the significant opportunity to influence national policy, greener public procurement, greener schools and education sector procurement. Universities are obliged to report scope 3 emissions (*which are indirect emissions, those outside of their control of which 70% is attributable to food and transport*) and they already have sustainable procurement policies, utilising a

sustainable checklist developed from Defra for procurement to deliver for events and for the universities.

- In the South West there is a procurement supply portal used by LA's for anything over the value of £25,000 – may need to look at the scale but could the sustainability food element be enhanced and used as the single mechanism for purchasing?
- One way to take this forward could be through the Universities civic agreements (*which sets out how universities have the capability, opportunity and responsibility to support the places where they are based*) and Exeter is currently discussing this with Cornwall colleagues to see how this could be done.
- It is hoped that Defra, supported by local MPs, will engage in looking at the transitional arrangements and take into account the evidence in the report and realise the significant challenges, gaps and risks if the SW doesn't get the provision of schemes, funding and advice right which otherwise will affect the viability of food production nationally.
- There is no mention of the phosphate and nitrate issues or actions on affordable solutions from the farming perspective as this also has a huge economic impact on the delivery of homes (3000 delayed in Somerset due to a planning embargo). The Board were assured that this is being considered, with work going on by Somerset Councils behind the scenes. It should be recognised that landholders and farmers have diversified in trying to develop new income streams both for residential and business use and therefore this is a challenge for everyone. NB The Phosphate Mitigation Report produced by Somerset will be out shortly and as Devon Districts have also highlighted this as an issue (especially for Teignbridge and East Devon) they have been advised to contact Somerset to view their road map. It was noted that this is also impacting parts of Cornwall.

It is hoped the report will assist in helping to inform the National Food Strategy led by Henry Dimbleby (*an independent review commissioned by Government to set out a vision and a plan for a better food system, post-Brexit*) to enable mechanisms to unlock the full potential and wider benefits of a domestic market via i.e public procurement, to obtain a true and correct value for sustainable food produced to high standards with the social benefits of land management and to include the opportunities of natural capital, carbon capture and the building in of resilience to future climate change.

- For the public sector, the main driver is social value as local gov't have to produce an annual report. A single approach is not the answer as the public sector is not a single body, so what is the way in, what are the drivers, it may be a collection of procurement officers, a collection of Chief Executives or groupings of different places around the carbon challenge but the key will be making it easy to access, creating packages and looking at the barriers? Would the LA's be willing to use their social capital commitments to specifically make a food declaration? Please could the Report sequence the recommendations and priorities starting with the commitment for a SW Food Procurement Declaration? The action plan would fall nicely into the remit of the new Food, Farming and Natural Capital Programme Board providing a Forum to make it happen.
- You have to get the buy-in of organisation leaders such as LA Chief Executives first to

<p>embed KPIs and measurable deliverable targets into their public procurement departments to shift the outputs, otherwise, there will be no headway.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Although the Report is light on supply chain mapping, an area difficult to obtain information on, lists of producers could be provided by e.g The Food and Drink Federation, The Chambers, Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB), Devon Food and Drink, Food South West, Supplying the South West by Proactis.</li> <li>➤ It is also important to collaborate with the SW Food Hub who are doing work on procurement to avoid duplication.</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTION:</b> The Board's comments to be shared with the University of Exeter team so they can be incorporated into the final report.</p> <p><u>Four asks of the board to consider from the presentation:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. For the board to adopt the recommendations in principle, subject to the final report</li> <li>2. To support the creation (and subsequent delivery) of an action plan based on those recommendations</li> <li>3. To present the report to the Joint Committee to seek their agreement to the recommendations</li> <li>4. To seek same above and wider collaboration with relevant partners via fellow LEPs, GSW and beyond.....</li> </ol> <p>The draft report and the presentation was enthusiastically received and praised by the Board and the Chair thanked everyone involved, especially ML and his team.</p> <p><b>The board agreed to the four asks from the presentation.</b></p>	
<p><b>7. Chief Executive's update</b></p> <p>There is a great deal of uncertainty at the moment in every sector compounded by external forces which are making the economic outlook post Brexit quite difficult and therefore important to develop a coherent approach. There is no economic data presented at this Board meeting but broadly the region's economic recovery is not quite back to the level it was pre-pandemic but is anticipated to be in the next quarter. Attending a recent CBI event around the manufacturing sector it was encouraging to hear positive feedback about order books, albeit with challenges around supply chains, skills shortages and costs, however, data from the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) states that more than 46 % of their businesses are in a fragile state, making recovery very patchy with high levels of employment but also more people economically inactive as people leave the job system. It will be worth revisiting the data in more depth at the spring Board meeting as there is concern that the covid response plans were based on the economy taking a couple of years to recover, but recovery is happening more quickly than anticipated.</p> <p>The Annual Performance Review (APR) was held with Gov't last week and the LEP is measured against 3 criteria:- strategy, delivery and governance and an initial pre-assessment gave a 'Met' rating for all 3 (this can either be Met or Not Met) and with nothing further at the meeting to suggest any change. The big request from Gov't was to</p>	



have all the Getting Building Fund money spent (or as much as possible) by the end of March and the LEP is meeting with theme leads to impress upon them the urgency. A couple of the capital projects are slipping a bit but the LEP will use its freedoms and flexibilities to ensure the spending target is achieved.

An update on the 5 sectors:-

Infrastructure – The first A303 improvement and upgrade work outside the standard maintenance in c20 years has started at Sparkford and work on improving the A358 is underway. There remain challenges around digital delivery in which the LEP has invested a lot of funding and the Board will get an update on it at the next meeting. There have been changes in structures i.e Highways England is now National Highways and Great British Railways. The Bus support funding runs out in March and it is unsure whether this will be extended and will have implications on public transport for the region.

Skills – still waiting for the skills act to be given royal assent hopefully in the next few weeks and once given this triggers local skills improvement plans which will be delivered based on a Devon and Somerset geography.

Innovation - 2 large innovation projects in the region with the iAero Building opening in Yeovil on 22 February and Smart Sound Test Bed in Plymouth in March and it hoped that Ministers may visit both.

Business Environment – Lots of changes around Dept. of International Trade (DIT) delivery with a new export strategy and a 3-year inward investment funding settlement. They are looking to invest in their officers with whom the LEP is working closely on Gravity. The LEP is also waiting for confirmation on the next steps of funding for Growth Hubs. There have also been recent announcements on new nuclear and Advanced Modular Reactors (AMRs)

Place – is now funded almost directly through the LAs. The area has 3 town deals busy preparing their business cases – DR sits on all 3 boards and it is interesting to note how different they all are. Somerset and Devon did quite well from the Community Renewal Fund and are very busy procuring it. Awaiting the outcome of UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Levelling Up Paper and possible future rounds of levelling up funding. There is a lot of work currently underway into preparing detailed business cases for the Freeport and with Somerset Authorities and Gravity on the enterprise zone for which the LEP is providing some funding to support. The challenge will be to ensure coherent propositions are being developed. The LEP needs to remain agile and therefore it's necessary to bring the Board up to speed on priorities for the next 12 months.

The following comment arose:-

- If the covid recovery transition funding for buses isn't extended from 1<sup>st</sup> April onwards the UK will see a 25% reduction in bus operated mileage (already down 22% since 2008) which will impact on carbon-neutral targets, sustainable travel, levelling up and health and well being as buses have an important part to play in this and to encourage all colleagues with any influence to back the bus agenda.

The Chair invited each LA representative to give their current views on County Deals and business engagement.

Devon County Council – The framework of county deals is expected within the forthcoming Levelling Up White paper and Devon will not be supportive of local Gov't reorganisation or a

mayoral system. It is expected and hoped that Devon will be invited to help develop a deal in the next couple of months and it is planned to establish a non-mayoral combined authority for Devon. Initial County deals will be announced alongside the White paper with the purpose being to tailor the needs of places, bringing decisions closer to the people. The business engagement piece is still evolving.

Plymouth City Council – Plymouth has worked collaboratively with the LEP over several years i.e helping to produce a local Industrial Strategy stamped by HMG but never published. It continues to work collectively with the LEP, LA's and businesses to be clear on what's needed to move the economy forward. The thinking is about continuing to build on previous work, not starting over again to achieve what the area needs. The talk is of potentially 3 levels of deals but this may depend on the governance arrangements which are still unknown. It is really important to continue business engagement and to find the best way to do this. On the greater Devon footprint, the economy is crucial but also about further integration of health and care and moving forward the education system, climate element will be key and for some parts of local Gov't how services may integrate? The Build Back Better (BBB) document is a really important starting point and there is a need for further and ongoing engagement to find the best way forward for a deal but to consider the links into Cornwall and Somerset i.e marine, aerospace, nuclear, farming sectors etc – the economy is not bound up by administrative boundaries it's about what sectors work best across what geography and this will need further discussions.

Torbay - Nothing further to add save that Torbay has been impressed with the unanimity of LAs around issues of affordable housing, skills and coastal towns and is trying not to second guess the outcomes of the Levelling Up White paper but will await its publication and be prepared to be fleet of foot to react.

Somerset - Communication with Gov't departments continues to be challenging. The position on a non- mayoral combined authority remains the same (Somerset were pioneers of this and the framework is still in place) and waiting to see how this develops. Specific to Somerset;- the long-awaited work on the A303 is progressing well with the next section moving forward between Sparkford and Podimore, on Gravity although bound by non-disclosure agreements will be a game-changer not only for Somerset but also for the greater peninsula and everything possible is being done to press the right levers in Gov't to ensure negotiations move forward; also in agreement with the comments regarding the important status around the Freeport and that this is brought to an effective conclusion.

Concerning unitarisation – the latest update is that the statutory change orders have been laid before Parliament. Key elements of the business case moving forward will be to strengthen relationships with partners including with the LEP, the Joint Committee, the Sub National Transport Board, the Great South West, the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) and the Western Gateway always aiming to forge more links especially in terms of Gravity. There are challenging times ahead in terms of the mechanisms and logistics in moving forward a unitary especially with elections in May to transition authority, followed by a shadow authority in place for a year before the vesting of the new authority in May 2023. It will provide a great opportunity to considerably streamline things for business, avoid duplication and provide clarity in many areas but it in no way lessens the commitment to working with partners and recognising that business and getting behind business them is the way to provide prosperity in the SW to carry out all the things that LAs



have to and want to do to support residents.

South Somerset District Council – The amount of work involved should not be underestimated and district councils still need to continue functioning for another year. It's a very busy time with numerous staff being seconded from all authorities to work on the governance and structure of the new authority and there are extreme concerns over the short space of time to set up what will be a large new authority. However, there is an agreement that these are major opportunities that need to be taken advantage of. Also of importance, as well as the A303, to not forget the A358 improvement works in South Somerset's area that proposes to upgrade the A358 to a dual carriageway between Southfields Roundabout on the A303 and the M5 at Taunton but why did it leaves the well-known Ilchester bypass bottleneck to last is a ridiculous situation. To conclude whatever differences the districts and county may have had in the past everyone is doing all that Gov't has asked to work together entailing hard work and cooperation between the staff which Val Keitch the Chair of the Local Government Reorganisation Joint Committee (LGR) vows will continue.

Exeter City Council – speaking on behalf of the Devon Districts, they are pleased that John Hart (Leader of Devon County Council) has been true to his word and not pushed for a mayoral system or unitary authority and of course wish to continue working with Plymouth and Torbay which are both integral to the success of Devon and the SW. This does make the problem more complicated but not insurmountable. Although governance arrangements are not completely sorted out the districts are happy and united in John taking the County Lead to speak on their behalf, feeling they have an equal input around the table and are satisfied he is good at articulating the voice of the districts and Devon at London meetings. The districts want to keep their local identity but are keen to work together on key issues e. g affordable housing. They feel they are in the best position as districts, the county and the unitary to do the job on Devon's behalf but just want the levers from Gov't to carry out the levelling up.

The Chair concluded with a plea that whatever local authority structures look like in the future that genuine partnership remains ongoing between the LEP, the LAs, businesses and academia (colleges and universities). The sum of all parts is considerably enhanced when all are working together and within the business engagement piece LEP thinking is prevalent at all times.

He also apologised that the meeting was overrunning and if people need to drop out at 12 noon that would be ok.

The session was handed back for the draft LEP Business Plan and 22/23 Operating Model. The presentation slides were circulated in advance and EJ proceeded to take the Board through what the priorities look like over the next 12 months. The slides laid out the purpose and the three 'asks' for the Board to consider, the 22/23 business plan implications and LEP scenarios, an orderly transition being key, the LEP offer to the area containing five priorities with the addition of leadership and strategy, the budget parameters and timelines. This breaks down into two workstreams with the transition piece provisionally ready for the October Board to sign off followed by implementation but alongside this, the day job continues with the need to agree to the budget and the support services for operational

<p>delivery put the operating model and service level agreements in place to carry on with the work of delivering clean inclusive growth and the Growth Hub, legacies etc.</p> <p>The CEO concluded by saying that whilst the Board didn't need to sign off the Business plan they needed to be aware of its context for the LEP to operate within its means. The management team will work out the operating model and Finance and Resources will agree on the budget.</p> <p>The recommendations for the Board to understand are as follows:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1) For the LEP to meet its going concerns it needs to sign off an operational budget of circa £1.3 million. If a further Gov't grant is forthcoming, at this stage there are no proposals to increase the budget but this will need a further conversation of what could be done differently.</b></li> <li><b>2) It is important to understand where the money is coming from – the LAs and the universities contribute to the LEP and whilst a decision is not needed today the working assumption is that this will continue for another year.</b></li> <li><b>3) That the LEP will concentrate on business-facing support, some legacy work and sector support, delivering programme boards around certain key interventions to which food and farming will be added onto.</b></li> </ol> <p><b>Action: for a further Board conversation to take place when the Levelling Up White paper is published. (<i>a virtual meeting is scheduled for 2 March at 10am</i>)</b></p> <p>The following comment was made:- of providing certainty to colleagues against the mitigation of flight risk (turnover of staff leaving). With a strong employment market recruiting other people to deliver legacy work will be very challenging.</p> <p><b>The board agreed to the above recommendations and are aware of the context of the business plan.</b></p>	
<p><b>8. Progress update – Clean Growth and Build Back Better – Claire Gibson</b></p> <p>This paper provides an update on the progress made towards delivering the Build Back Better transformational opportunities plan together with details of the refresh of the plan that is underway, in part to better integrate the Blueprint for Clean Growth and also to reflect some policy changes since the plan was published in April 2021.</p> <p>A few highlights:- activity has been stepped up in the energy sector with the setting up of a programme board, being sure to not duplicate what other groups are doing, this group has met and agreed its purpose which is set out in the paper and is consistent with the role and purposes of the Sustainable Aviation Programme Board. The LEP has commissioned and is funding a joint study around floating offshore wind (FLOW) in the Celtic Sea in partnership with Devon County, Torridge District and North Devon Councils around the potential opportunities for deployment for the HotSW area. The proposal is for 4gw which the Crown Estate is looking to lease and deliver in alignment with the Prime Minister's 10 point plan to</p>	

be operational by 2030. The LEP needs to understand what this means for the supply chain, skills support and infrastructure to get the most benefit out of the proposal. The report is due out in April but initial findings will be brought to the Board's Deep Dive on Energy on 11 March.

The LEP has now met with both the Crown Estate and the Offshore Renewal Catapult in order to engage in more activity at the national level. The Catapult is chairing the Celtic Sea Cluster, originally a partnership between Wales and Cornwall, (although the Universities have been involved but the LEP hasn't been) and currently looking to see if a representative from GSW can join the Cluster Board. One of their workstreams is around research and innovation which will be good to have more engagement in and there was good news this week of both Universities receiving grants for their projects of £60 million towards more research and development into floating wind technology.

The meeting with the Crown Estate was equally positive as they are now actively engaged with the National Grid trying to provide a solution in terms of grid connectivity that supports the whole of the Celtic Sea proposal as opposed to individual projects trying to secure their own grid agreements. They are taking a more proactive role and the LEP will continue to liaise with them given the potential impact on the area. NB one of the connections areas is through Alverdiscott in North Devon.

Also had a positive meeting with Western Power Distribution (WPD) on behalf of the GSW LEPs agreeing a more partnership working arrangement and identifying a single point of contact for the GSW into WPD and for them to share their energy scenarios with the LEPs for review which underpins their business plan into Ofgem. It is hoped WPD will present a summary of their plans and investment programmes at the Board Energy Deep Dive.

On Nuclear – the LEP has approved a further £50, 000 of funding to support an additional 12 months of supply chain activity (the final year this project can be extended). This is an important year as the project transitions through to the end of the construction phase and with the announcement of a possible new plant in the South East to ensure the HotSW supply chains can access the opportunities there. Legacy conversations continue with EDF and again it is hoped EDF will present at the Board's Energy Deep Dive.

Green skills – The LEP through the Skills Advisory Panel (SAP) have agreed to part fund a study with the SW Energy Hub to look at the skills requirement programmes needed for retrofit in conjunction with colleagues Cornwall and Gloucestershire LEPs but this may take a few months before more can be reported back on.

An update on Digital – the Strategic Investment Panel (SIP) have approved the £1.5 million skills programme and this will kindly be delivered by Devon County Council and also the £0.5 million for the Growth Hub to provide specific digital advisors which will hopefully be in place by April subject to recruitment. A call has gone out for the BBB strand for a digital investment of up to £2 million for capital, particularly targeted around data analytics and digital innovation transformational projects to stimulate the environmental intelligence market, marine geospatial innovation, reduced emissions from agriculture and 5G with a particular focus on delivering net-zero ambitions. Expecting a good response to request for EOIs by the deadline of 9 February. For the Tourism sector, the LEP is also helping to fund and develop a Tourism Data Hub.

<p>Build Back Better plan – is currently undergoing a refresh to incorporate recent policy changes and trying to weave more of the Blueprint for Clean Growth into it, specifically to include a new food, farming and natural capital transformational programme (a summary is provided in the paper) and will then need to finalise the refresh and get support from all the stakeholders.</p> <p><b>Action: Chairs are being sought for the Energy and the Aviation Boards. Suggestions please from the Board, as CG is currently chairing both.</b> JPetts volunteered to chair Energy.</p> <p>The chair volunteered MS to Chair the Food, Farming and Natural Capital Programme Board.</p> <p>PColes has put kindly put himself forward to chair the new Digital Programme Board.</p>	<p>All/ CG</p>
<p><b>9. Leadership Group updates all verbal – Innovation, Business, Place, Skills Advisory Panel and Inclusive Growth</b></p> <p><u>Innovation</u> – progress is being made towards Gov’t engagement in the investment of the marine, environmental science and technopole strands to ensure commercialisation of these research strands and it's important to keep the 3 elements together. Very grateful to JPetts and LR and their Universities for their support and hope to have more to report at the next Board meeting.</p> <p><u>Skills Advisory Panel (SAP)</u> – a meeting was held this week at which the latest draft of the Local Skills Report was circulated and feedback was invited. The Dept of Education (DoE) see this as a light touch process not wanting to see major changes at this stage which is probably not necessarily what’s wanted. Feedback was given by the LEP Chair and CEO around Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs), help to grow point and school performance and there is a commitment to try to weave this in and take on board. Now awaiting final feedback from the remaining SAP members before recirculating the report.</p> <p>A presentation was given by Phill Adams, Senior Manager, Employment, Skills &amp; Learn Devon / Operations Lead - Skills, HotSW LEP based at Devon County Council on job statistics. Of note:- there are currently 65,000 job vacancies but only 30,000 available on the register with only a third of the people available deemed to be job-ready and for employers presents a huge challenge. Also, a significant number of people on the register are viewed as difficult to place which doesn’t give a positive backdrop to fill all the vacancies that are out there.</p> <p>Roundtable comments were similar to previously – high numbers of job vacancies, lack of people and right people to fill them, struggling to recruit and job-hopping (but less of this than the month before). There are concerns about the impact on productivity and the ability of businesses to bounce back post-pandemic. There were some positive comments around supply chains beginning to settle, although not sorted but this is caveated by a smaller number of people at the virtual meeting. Petroc the only college this time on the call reported high numbers of absenteeism due to covid and also high numbers of dropouts</p>	

from courses (more than normal) which needs further analysis (this is contrary to the University of Plymouth which have seen less attrition than previous years). The Digital Dashboard presentation was given a quick run through and was well received but as the meeting ran out of time this will be brought to the next meeting to afford it more time and consideration.

Although the focus of the skills report is on the post 16 skills world, the wider issues of pre 16 education must be flagged up and taken into consideration to ensure education is more joined up.

Inclusive Growth – the first meeting is due on 7 February and the expert panel have identified several colleagues from the public sector, private sector and education. There is an opportunity to identify the actions for delivering inclusive growth but also an opportunity to come back to the Board in April to reflect if the scope is right? There is a need to revisit this in terms of social mobility, educational attainment, job opportunity attainment for young people and those in rural and underperforming locations. How do we ensure this is hard-wired into the LEPs decision making and is picked up across the respective groups? Following the meeting, a full review will be brought to the next Board meeting, reflecting on how inclusive growth can be embedded into the LEPs workstreams and what additional resources are necessary.

Due to the shortness of time, RS gave an update on the Business Leadership Group, Finances and Resources (F&R) and SIP in the MS teams chat facility and these are recorded here: *there are no major issues from the Business group. F & R and SIP in summary it is steady as we go, the main focus on discharging legacy commitments, the Getting Building Fund, business support and Build Back Better. The financial position is in line with expectations. Happy to receive offline questions.*

NB - JPetts confirmed the University of Plymouth funding for the LEP for next year.

The finances have been bolstered by further governance work over the last year and work is underway to add in some more checks and balances, due to some errors that were highlighted in the translation from Somerset's SAP system to the spreadsheets used for reporting. The finance reporting is run through Somerset's SAP system with an annual close down (it would be preferable to close this down monthly but this is not possible) and errors can occur when translating this to spreadsheets. Ben Bryant the finance officer at Somerset will provide more in-depth oversight and make forecasts more granular so that The LEP gets early warning signs when funds are not being deployed. The Somerset team were thanked for their excellent work.

**10. ESIF update plus annexes a) ESF, b) EAFRD, c) ERDF** (all commercially confidential)  
Since the circulation of the above papers the Dept for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUK) has confirmed there is approx £1.5 million of money available for transition areas (which covers the geographical county of Devon) for any of the priorities of innovation, business support and IT etc. All projects have been contacted but it is only for project extensions, not new projects and interested parties need to contact Dan Cotteril at

<p>DLUK.</p> <p>The following comments were made:- concerning ESIF there is a definite feeling of coming to an end with tight deadlines, closing dates and strict compliance and it would be a shame to not grab these last bits of significant funding. As outlined in the CEX Report whilst goal posts and structures are changing there will be significantly less money available in the spending review than previously for economic development. The LEP and partners need to recognise the challenge of having less local money available to carry out local economic development as during a transition period Gov't tend to delay spending which helps the exchequer as programmes close down and it generally takes a year or two to get things moving again.</p> <p>Ref finances to flag on the LEP's risk register whilst there may be lots of money to spend on digital type investments there is a real shortage of digital staff to deliver these and concern over LEP staff retention more generally given the current uncertainty.</p>	
<p><b>11. Papers for noting</b></p> <p>Comms was highlighted and with a recent review, some additional management support and a concerted social media push it was felt that the LEPs 'reach' in terms of businesses has gone from average to good with a good close working relationship with the Business Representative Organisations (BROs).</p> <p>No further comments on any other papers.</p>	
<p><b>12. AOB</b></p> <p>DR:- reminded the Board about the Energy Deep dive in March and is keen for the Board to come forward to comment on what they want to be included as well as whom they would like invited to speak. It's an opportunity for the LAs to provide an update on where they are i.e on community energy schemes etc. and the Universities.</p> <p>The Business Bulletin will be published at the end of the month and is based on data from the BROs around the business sentiment. The new dashboards are being published, the economic one is out and the futures one is due next month and these will be circulated.</p> <p>PColes:- on the energy piece to include a focus on the FLOW supply chain which is critical.</p> <p>KT:- The LEP will be circulating a date for a joint social mobility conference (sometime late March or beginning of April) being held in conjunction with Exeter University. The University has a SW Social Mobility project underway and it will launch its report with plans on how as a region this issue can be tackled. KT sits on the Board which is led by Prof Lee Elliot Major and would be delighted if as many Board members could attend as possible.</p> <p>KT:-thanked the Board for their patience and ongoing commitment to the LEP Board and support which is much valued during this period of change with hope there will soon be some guidance forthcoming from the Gov't as to what the future will look like.</p> <p>Despite some topics overrunning the meeting managed to make up time and finished 6 minutes early.</p>	

**Board Deep Dive into Energy:- 11 March 9.30am – 12 noon via MS teams**

**Next Board meeting:- 8 April 9.30am – 12.30pm face to face or virtual TBC**