

Berkshire Leaders and MP's Business Advisory Board Discussion

Berkshire Prosperity Board

16 September 2024

Government *Guidance* on setting up Business Boards

Purpose: The Business Board might be used for consulting on emerging plans, feedback on implementation of economic programmes, provide endorsement for significant public funding proposals – e.g., competitive funding bids, Growth Hub plans/delivery, link into wider economic plans and engagement structures such as Growth Hubs, LSIPs and Careers Hubs (as per Government guidance)

- From April 2024, Government will support local authorities to deliver the core functions previously delivered by LEPs – namely, business representation, local economic planning, and delivery of government programmes.
- Private sector and employer perspectives can enhance local economic strategies and interventions, including shaping business, trade and investment support around local business; providing challenge and insight on business impacts of public sector initiatives. Also provide market credibility and a strong vehicle for leveraging match funding for public sector programmes and developing effective partnership projects to support growth.
- Demonstrating a strong business voice is also an eligibility requirement for some government programmes (including Growth Hubs) as well as key principle of the English Devolution Accountability Framework.
- The most appropriate and sustainable geography should be adopted that maximises democratic accountability, efficiency, and effective service delivery.

Government *Guidance* on Business Representation members

- Government *guidance* sets out a broad base for membership – a wide range of business types, sizes, and locations relating to local economic strengths and priorities. Also, a diversity of voices, business representative organisations (e.g., local Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses).
- There should also be a clear conflict of interest policy.
- Managing the expectation of members through setting out clear roles and responsibilities, both for the board, and for the Prosperity Board – how input will be commissioned, supported, reported and used.
- Any new business board members must be appointed through an open process. That process should ensure appointees are able to provide a constructive check and challenge on local decision making using their private sector perspective.

Examples of Business Boards set up by other Local Authority Regions

1. Cheshire and Warrington
2. Surrey
3. Greater Manchester

Purpose/remit of the Business Board – Cheshire and Warrington

The **Board is advisory in nature** and more specifically will provide insights on:

- Sector intelligence and the direction of the economy
- Operation of the economy and the key drivers shaping employment, productivity and sector/cluster performance
- Supply-chain issues that are holding back the growth of the economy
- Opportunities for growth, innovation or investment across the economy and its key clusters & sectors
- Opportunities for links between the Board and wider economy to drive productivity, investment and employment
- Outline of potential economic development initiatives / interventions
- ‘Horizon scanning’ for different funding initiatives (private and public)
- Ideas to help promote the Cheshire and Warrington economy more widely

Business Board Composition - Cheshire and Warrington

(C&W are still in the process of developing their Business Advisory Board)

The **draft Terms of Reference** propose that:

- 15-20 members, recruited via an open and transparent process.
- The Business Board should include representation from social enterprise, culture, skills, health, young people, the Local Visitor Economy Partnership, and should be fully reflective of the other characteristics of the region's business community such as size, geography and sector as well as reflecting the composition of C&W's population.).
- Appointments are for three years.
- To provide continuity, to appoint up to four existing LEP board members to join the initial Business Board for a one-year period.
- The Business Board should be able to form sub-groups where needed and coopt additional members, for example where they require specialist expertise.
- Members should be expected to abide by the Nolan principles.

Purpose/remit of the Business Board – Surrey

The Business Board name of Surrey is **The Surrey Business Leaders Forum** and will:

- Have an informal advisory role to the One Surrey Growth Board (Prosperity Board equivalent) on the implementation of local economic, skills, and infrastructure strategies.
- Receive drafts in advance of the OSGB to comment and scrutinise proposals.
- Provide endorsement for public funding proposals and initiatives.
- Shape business, trade, and investment support related to local business and economic need.
- Input comments for relevant Cabinet papers.
- Provide specialist delivery expertise where required.

Business Board Composition - Surrey

The **Terms of Reference** state that:

- Comprised of 23 members, recruited via an open and transparent process. These members span a variety of business sectors, including Transports, Creative, Digital Tech, Life Sciences and Finance.
- Bring together senior business leaders across Surrey to identify economic and infrastructure priorities and influence the actions and direction of funding of public funding partners.
- Promote and guide the sustainable economic development of Surrey in a context of green growth.
- Oversee, inform, and influence the development of policies, strategies and action plans relating to economic growth and infrastructure .
- Contribute to evidence relating to Surrey's economic performance by providing company level data that reflects economic conditions and positive/negative experiences of local businesses. Advise on the implementation of its Economic and Infrastructure strategies.
- Monitor progress of the economy and the projects being delivered by the Board and its partners.
- Make recommendations to the Board on matters relating to the achievement of the Economic Development and Infrastructure priorities.
- Help influence local, national, and regional funding allocation decisions that help to secure the economic development of Surrey.

Business Board Composition – Greater Manchester

- Has 17 members, representing a variety of industrial sectors.
- The Board are appointed through a through an open recruitment process.
- The Board works to provide private sector insight, guidance and challenge to help shape strategy and policy. It is made up of leaders from Greater Manchester's business community.
- As the Business Board continues its evolution, new members will offer fresh perspectives, valuable experience and expertise gained in a range of sectors and topics critical to the region's future success.

Business Advisory Boards - Summary of Structure

- Focus on business and economic issues; usually on key industrial sectors.
- The key responsibility is to monitor and challenge the Economic Strategy, advise on specific decisions and review project plans and funding bids.
- Membership is between 15 to 20 members.
- Membership comprised of businesses, reserving a fixed number of spaces for business representative organisations.
- Membership is for a fixed term.
- Members are recruited via an open and transparent process.
- The chair and vice chair should be selected from the business membership (and the chair might sit on the Growth Prosperity board ?).
- They have subgroups looking into specific areas work.

Recommended initial structure for the Berkshire Business Board

- Membership is to be drawn from Berkshire's key industrial sectors (such as life sciences and agritech, creative and screen industries, IT and digital, visitor economy, retail and hospitality (high streets), and developers and construction
- The BBB should comprise between 15 and 20 members
- 5 seats are reserved for business representative organisations. LEP (1 members), Chamber of Commerce (1 member), University of Reading (1 member), FE colleges (1 member) & FSB 1 member)
- Meets every quarter & the Prosperity Board Programme Manager will provide the secretariat for the meetings
- A forward programme to be agreed and will form part of the offer to businesses to demonstrate purpose and benefit of membership
- The priority workstreams invite additional specialist businesses/organisations to join their regular monthly business. e.g. Affordable Housing meetings might include Homes England, Sovereign Housing, Developers

Timeline - Berkshire Business Board

Action	Date
Present Business Board proposal and update at the September Berkshire Prosperity Board meeting	16 th September 2024
Letter/advertisement with open invitation to businesses inviting them to apply to become a member of the Business Board. Application pack will include covering letter Terms of Reference and application form	W/C 23 rd September 2024
Closing date for business to register interest	W/C 14 th October 2024
Letters offering place on the board	W/C 21 st October 2024
First meeting of the Berkshire Business Board	W/C November 25 th 2024