

Minutes of a meeting of the East Midlands Freeport Board

**Held on 24 July 2026, at 11am, at Council Chamber, Rushcliffe Arena, Rugby Road, West
Bridgford, NG2 7YG**

PRESENT

Directors

Nora Senior – Independent Chair

Phil Canning – Uniper

Ben Green - Segro

Councillor Harrison Fowler – Leicestershire County Council (LCC)

Edward Highfield – East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA)

Councillor John Lawson – Derbyshire County Council (DCC)

Peter Ralston – Goodman

Ioan Reed-Aspley – East Midlands Airport (EMA)

Frank Robotham – Maritime Transport

Julie Rossiter – Etwall Land Limited (ELL)

Councillor Tony Saffell – North West Leicestershire District Council (NWLDC)

Councillor Stephen Taylor – South Derbyshire District Council (SDDC)

Councillor Neil Clarke – Rushcliffe Borough Council (RBC)

Accountable Body Officers

Tom Goshawk – Head of Investment Strategy and Programmes

Executive Delivery Team

Jonathan Bretherton – Commercial Director (Via Microsoft Teams)

Dan Cooper – Head of Communications and Inward Investment

James Faulconbridge – Executive Personal Assistant

Stacy Ford – Communications and Marketing Manager

Katie Greenhalgh – Head of Green Growth and Inclusion

Naomi Kwasa – Governance and Committees Lead

Paul Miller – Head of Operations and Programmes

Tom Newman-Taylor – Chief Executive

Also present

Karl Apps – DCC

Wayne Bexton – NCC (Via Microsoft Teams)

Peter Collins – Sharpe Pritchard

Adam Hill – RBC

Justin Ives – SDDC (Via Microsoft Teams)

Mike Roylance – SDDC (Via Microsoft Teams)

Zafar Saleem – LCC

Allison Thomas – NWLDC (Via Microsoft Teams)

MHCLG Representative

1	<u>Apologies for Absence</u> Apologies were received from Steve Griffiths who was represented by Ioan Reed-Aspley and Andrew Pilsworth, who was represented by Ben Green. Apologies were also received from Councillor Walker-Gurley.
2	<u>Declarations of Interest</u> The Chair invited the Board to declare any real or perceived conflicts of interest. No interests were declared.
3	<u>Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 18 June 2026</u> The minutes of the Board meeting held on 18 June 2026 were APPROVED as a correct record.
4	<u>Minutes of the Public Sector Directors Group Meeting held on 18 June 2026</u> These were provided to the full Board for information only.
5	<u>Introduction to Career Ready Interns</u> The Chair noted that EMF has recently hosted three interns from the Career Ready programme, two of whom, Abby and Amara were present in the meeting. The Board heard that the interns had spent the previous two weeks working with the Freeport team, researching and developing skills-related project ideas for the Freeport sites. Their work had culminated in presentations to the Delivery Team, school representatives and Career Ready staff. It was also noted that all three interns had made an excellent contribution during their time with the organisation. The Chair invited them to introduce themselves and share their experiences from their internships and a little about the projects they had been working on. Amara introduced herself and spoke about her aspirations to train as a doctor and the project she had been developing which focused on converting a mobile shipping container into a skills and training facility for the community around the EMIP site. She said that her time working with the Freeport had been an incredible experience and highlighted the opportunity to attend an event near East Midlands Airport, where she had met the Mayor and presented her ideas. She described the Career Ready programme as a valuable and rewarding experience. Abby introduced herself and explained that she was interested in pursuing a career in business development or management and hoped to undertake an apprenticeship after completing her studies. She outlined her work on proposals for the Ratcliffe site, focusing on ways of improving the environment surrounding future data centre developments. Her ideas included creating wildflower meadows, planting trees, installing habitat boxes and involving the local communities. A third intern, Emma, had started and finished her placement earlier. She had presented to the Executive Delivery Team a proposal for a new wildflower meadow and pathway to

	connect by a safe walking route two villages nearby to the EMAGIC site, offering a new connection between the communities. The Chair congratulated the interns on the quality of their ideas and commended them for the confidence they had shown in presenting to the Board. She encouraged them to maintain their focus and enthusiasm, take the learning they had gained from the placement into the next stage of their education and careers, and wished them every success for the future.
6	<u>Chair's Update</u> The Chair provided a brief update to the Board. She highlighted the primacy of the devolution agenda in England and therefore the increasing role of Mayoral Combined Authorities and emphasised the need for the Board to recognise and reflect this evolving landscape in its future thinking and planning. It was noted that the implications for the Freeport's wider role would form part of discussions at the Board's Strategy Day in October. She reported on ongoing engagement with the Mayor regarding the case for public investment in Freeport sites and EMF's key asks of Government. Discussions had focused on ensuring alignment between local priorities and Government objectives, including areas relating to communications (which would be covered in the later Communications Strategy item) and future delivery. She noted that Lord Stockwood, a strong advocate of the Freeport programme, was no longer Minister for Investment, and that engagement with new stakeholders and decision-makers would be required as priorities within Government evolved. The Chair highlighted the importance of the Mayor's continued advocacy on behalf of the Freeport and the region. The Chair noted that she had attended the opening of the Hybrid Propulsion Systems Laboratory at the University of Nottingham, which had benefited from Freeport innovation funding. The event provided a valuable opportunity to discuss the impact of the investment and future innovation opportunities. The Chair reminded Directors of the requirement to maintain up-to-date Declarations of Interest and requested that outstanding returns be completed as soon as possible. The Delivery Team AGREED to circulate current declarations to the Board for information and consistency. The Board NOTED the update.
7	<u>CEO Update</u> The CEO provided a brief update to the Board on a number of topics; • Programme Management and Governance – A review, led by EMCCA, is underway of both formal and informal governance arrangements to ensure meetings and decision-making processes remained focused, efficient and appropriately structured. EMF's Head of Operations and Programmes would lead this work over the coming months.

	• Planning and Transport – The CEO thanked the Local Planning Authorities who had approved the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), noting the considerable effort required to complete the work within challenging timescales and before planning regulations changed in June 2026. The Board were advised that further planning activity would be required in due course but that future timescales were expected to be more manageable. • Transport – The CEO highlighted the importance of ongoing work to produce a cumulative transport assessment across Freeport sites and that there remained gaps in information received from some local authority partners. The CEO indicated that a follow-up email would be issued requesting additional support from planning and transport teams to ensure the necessary data could be gathered. The Board NOTED the update.
8	<u>Member Update</u> The Board received an update from EMF's Head of Communications and Inward Investment on the proposals for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) across the region, noting potential implications for the Freeport programme and anticipated implementation timescales. Maps illustrating the proposed new authority boundaries had been circulated within the agenda pack. The Chair invited public sector members to comment on the proposals and it was noted that in some cases the Government's decisions had differed from locally preferred options and from consultation responses submitted by residents and local authorities. The Board were advised that some councils were considering legal challenge options and seeking further legal advice regarding the process followed by Government, and that significant detail on implementation arrangements remained outstanding. It was also noted that responsibilities for planning, highways, economic development and all other local government functions would transfer to the new authorities, a change that EMF will need to navigate ahead of 2028. During the transition period EMF will need to work with both existing councils and shadow authorities, creating a period of dual governance. The Board also recognised that a prolonged period of organisational change could divert attention and capacity away from economic development and growth priorities in the new authorities. Further points were raised regarding the potential workforce implications arising from the reorganisation, including senior leadership changes, recruitment activity, the potential loss of organisational memory and challenges in maintaining staff engagement during a period of uncertainty, alongside the significant workload facing elected members and officers as they prepared for the transition to the new authorities. The Delivery Team will reflect this appropriately in the corporate risk register, and impact on timelines for delivery, and keep the Board apprised of updates and implications, first to be discussed with the Audit, Risk and Compliance Subcommittee. In discussing the implications for EMF, the Board agreed that the programme would need to adapt to a changing local government landscape whilst maintaining delivery

	momentum. The Board emphasised the importance of ensuring Government understood the potential impact of reorganisation on Freeport delivery, investment confidence and project timescales. It was suggested that these factors should inform future discussions with Government, including ongoing conversations regarding programme extensions and delivery deadlines. The Chair acknowledged that the reorganisation process was likely to create additional complexity and uncertainty for businesses and investors. The CEO noted that the Freeport had already successfully navigated a series of political and organisational changes since its creation and expressed confidence that the partnership would continue to do so. However, he recognised the importance of helping stakeholders understand the implications of LGR for Freeport delivery. The Board agreed that there was a need to maintain a clear understanding of emerging structures and responsibilities within the new authorities and to ensure the Freeport remained well-positioned to engage with future leadership teams as they developed. The Board NOTED the update.
9	<u>Communications and Inward Investment Quarterly Update</u> The Board received an update from the Head of Communications and Inward Investment on inward investment enquiries, Government engagement and recent communications activity. He updated the Board on recent changes within Government, including the relocation of responsibility for economic growth policy into No10 North, and wider changes to ministerial and departmental structures. It was reported that although Lord Stockwood is no longer Minister for Investment, he would remain in post as Chair of the Office for Investment. The Board discussed the volume and quality of inward investment enquiries being received through both Government channels and regional networks and it was observed that whilst enquiry levels remained healthy, there was a need to ensure appropriate due diligence was undertaken before introducing prospective investors to Freeport partners. It was also noted that the Board had not received a detailed review of inward investment activity for some time and requested strategic analysis of enquiry trends over the previous three years, including changes in the volume, sector, profile and quality of projects being considered. This would enable the Board to understand emerging trends, assess the effectiveness of current activity and determine future priorities in conjunction with EMCCA and regional partners. It was noted that relatively few enquiries appeared to progress to delivery and suggested that expectations should be grounded in the realities of site development and delivery timescales. The CEO highlighted positive feedback received from Government officials, the Mayor and the Mayor's team regarding the Freeport's inward investment concierge service. Whilst recognising that some enquiries generated stronger outcomes than others, he stressed the importance of continuing to work closely with regional partners to ensure a coordinated approach to investor engagement. The Chair welcomed the discussion and reiterated the importance of understanding longer-term trends in inward investment enquiries and presenting a more detailed inward investment analysis to a future Board meeting. She agreed on the value of the suggested analysis to identify priority markets and focus future efforts and resources effectively. The

	Chair also supported the need for robust due diligence processes to ensure that Board members and partners concentrated on opportunities with genuine potential to deliver investment and jobs. The Board NOTED the update.
10	<u>Trade Union Engagement</u> The Head of Green Growth and Inclusion presented a paper on future Trade Union engagement with East Midlands Freeport. The paper outlined a number of options for developing closer collaborative working with Trade Union representatives in response to emerging Government policy and draft Industrial Strategy Zone (ISZ) guidance. It was explained that ongoing discussions with Trade Unions had focused on identifying opportunities to incorporate workforce perspectives into Freeport activity whilst ensuring any engagement arrangements remained proportionate and aligned with the Freeport's strategic role. The Board then welcomed representatives from TUC Midlands, GMB Midlands and Unite the Union, who were invited to present their proposed approach to collaboration and answer questions. The Board had the opportunity to question the TU representatives and explore their understanding of the size of Freeport staff (20) and the Union expectations of dealing directly with occupiers which would be outside the remit of the Freeport. They also noted the positive working relationships already established with the Freeport team and thanked officers for their openness and engagement to date. Following the presentation, the TU representatives left the meeting and the Board considered the proposals. The Board welcomed the constructive engagement and recognised the value of maintaining dialogue with Trade Unions, particularly in relation to workforce development, skills, good employment practices and broader economic growth objectives. The Chair summarised the discussion. It was AGREED that; • The outcome of the Board's discussion would be fed back to the TU representatives.
11	<u>Communications Strategy</u> The Communications and Marketing Manager presented to the Board the proposed Communications and Public Affairs Strategy for 2026–2028. The report sought Board approval for the strategic direction of EMF's communications and public affairs approach, including its role, priorities, governance, risk approach, resource principles and success measures. It was noted that no new funding was being requested beyond that already agreed by the Board as part of the Business Plan. The Communications and Marketing Manager noted that the strategy should not be viewed as a communications plan in isolation, but as an approach to support delivery of the Business Plan by creating the right conditions for progress through stronger advocacy, clearer partner alignment, increased investor confidence and better community understanding.

	She highlighted that the Freeport was entering a different phase, moving from awareness-raising towards influencing the conditions needed for progress. She noted the importance of clarifying EMF's role in relation to EMCCA, the Mayor, landowners, developers and local authorities. She confirmed that EMF would own the overarching Freeport narrative, strategic public affairs asks, investment proposition, partner alignment and evidence of progress against the Business Plan, while recognising that the mayor and EMCCA are a key route into Government and own the wider regional growth, devolution, transport, skills and investment narrative. This would avoid duplication of effort and ensure better alignment, particularly given the Mayor's role as the primary route into Government. The Board had the opportunity to discuss the report, and the importance of political engagement with MPs was noted. The Communications and Marketing Manager advised that this would form part of the policy influence strand. The Board supported the principle of tracking influence, confidence and alignment, and agreed that a dashboard or template be brought back to a future meeting to show how impact, attitudes and change would be monitored. The Board requested robust measurement and benchmarking to give a clear view of starting points, strengths, weaknesses and the direction of travel in order to assess the Strategy's effectiveness. It was advised that there will be quarterly reporting, with the first phase focused on establishing a baseline and then tracking progress from that point. The Board also discussed partner roles in communications and public affairs. It was noted that EMF could help to amplify announcements and that there was a need for better visibility and coordination before information enters the public domain, particularly where public statements relate to landowners, sites or issues that may require careful handling. Following the discussion the Board APPROVED the Communications and Public Affairs Strategy 2026-2028.
12	<u>Accountable Body Governance Review</u> EMCCA's Executive Director of Place – and EMF Director appointed by EMCCA – provided a verbal update on the proposed Accountable Body Governance Review. The Board NOTED the update.
13	<u>Governance Protocol</u> The Head of Operations and Programmes introduced the report which sought approval of a Governance Protocol to aid robust decision-making where conflicts of interest and commercially sensitive information could arise. The protocol had been commissioned by the Board in June following previous discussions about allocating funding, including Seed Capital decisions last year and discussion about EMF's proposed action to accelerate EMIP development in May. As context, the Head of Operations and Programmes noted that Phase 1 of the approved Investment Strategy prioritised intervention to unlock tax sites, in theory granting effective

subsidy and benefit to Member organisations. It was therefore essential to manage real and perceived conflicts of interest whilst establishing a clear framework which satisfied the other obligations of EMF's constitutional framework, including acting in good faith to Members, managing Director fiduciary duties, managing public money, and supporting effective decision-making – particularly that of the Public Sector Directors Group with responsibility for deciding how public money is allocated. It was noted that the protocol is distinct to the wider governance review being undertaken by EMCCA and provides a practical framework that could be implemented immediately.

EMF's legal adviser then provided an overview of the protocol, explaining that it was grounded in established governance principles and was intended to provide a framework rather than a rigid or prescriptive process. The protocol sets out a structured approach to decision-making, including identifying the matter under consideration, determining the appropriate decision-maker, identifying and managing conflicts of interest, classifying and sharing information appropriately, engaging affected members, recording decisions and providing assurance and ongoing monitoring. He noted that the protocol sought to ensure that commercially sensitive information and matters that could provide a competitive advantage were handled appropriately, whilst also supporting transparency and the quality of decision-making. Information should be classified at the lowest appropriate level, with restricted information shared only on a need-to-know basis and supported by appropriate confidentiality arrangements where required. The protocol was intended to strengthen confidence in the governance and decision-making process and provide clear assurance to stakeholders.

The Board discussed the report. It was noted that the protocol's effectiveness would become clearer when applied to live investment decisions. The Board supported testing the robustness of the framework through practical application and reviewing its operation as experience developed. The Board also queried the extent to which the full Board would have visibility of matters being considered under the protocol, particularly where decisions might ultimately be taken by a subset of members or through delegated arrangements. It was noted that assurance mechanisms within the protocol included reporting and minute-taking requirements to ensure that decisions and deliberations could be appropriately communicated to the wider Board while respecting restrictions on commercially sensitive information.

The Board also sought clarification on the engagement of affected parties and how disagreements would be handled where a member affected by a proposal did not agree with an assessment or proposed course of action. The Head of Operations and Programmes advised that the protocol required affected members to be engaged throughout the development of proposals - discussions would take place with affected parties before matters reached formal decision-making stages and their views and positions should be captured within Board papers. Where there might be disagreement the Delivery Team would liaise with the affected parties to agree a solution, within the parameters of the protocol, before the item is presented to the Board. Where concerns arose through implementation, the protocol would be kept under review and refined as necessary.

The Chair welcomed the work undertaken to develop the protocol and recognised the importance of having an agreed framework in place as investment decisions progress. It was noted that the protocol would provide a useful basis for supporting good

	governance, managing conflicts appropriately and maintaining confidence in decision-making processes. Following the discussion the Board APPROVED the Governance Protocol for immediate implementation and requested that the operation of the protocol be kept under review as it is applied to live decisions, with any lessons learned or required refinements brought back to the Board for consideration.
14	<u>Action Log.</u> The Chair requested that any comments on the Action Log be shared with the Delivery Team via email.
15	<u>Board and Subcommittee Forward Look</u> The Chair requested that any comments on the Forward Look be shared with the Delivery Team via email.
16	<u>Any Other Business</u> The Chair informed the Board that this would be the final meeting attended by Julie Rossiter due to her departure from Severn Trent. On behalf of the Board, the Chair thanked Julie for her many years of service and support as a Director. Particular recognition was given to her active and constructive contribution to Board discussions, her role in the People and Remuneration Subcommittee, and the strategic insight and challenge she had consistently brought to the organisation. The Board wished Julie every success in her future endeavours. The Chair noted a small number of administrative and governance matters requiring follow-up. It was requested that issues relating to SharePoint access be resolved ahead of the next meeting cycle to ensure papers are distributed effectively. She also requested that the corporate risk register be brought back to a future meeting for discussion, following review by the Audit Risk and Compliance Subcommittee. The Board were advised that there would be no Board meeting in August and that the next meeting would take place on Thursday 17 September 2026 at the East Midlands Zero Carbon Innovation Centre (EMZCIC), University of Nottingham. Board members were invited to attend a tour of the Hybrid Propulsion Systems Laboratory prior to the meeting, with further details and timings to be circulated nearer the time. The meeting finished at 2pm.