

**Leader of the Council**  
Councillor D Hitchiner

Mandy Thorn  
The Marches LEP  
Cameron House  
Knights Court  
Archers Way  
Battlefield Enterprise Park  
Shrewsbury  
SY1 3GA

Your Ref:  
Our Ref: DH/SJM  
Please ask for: Councillor D Hitchiner  
Direct line / Extension:  
E-mail:

27 July 2020

Dear Mandy

## **GROWTH FUND PROJECTS**

I refer to our meeting on Friday with you and Gill Hamer and my cabinet colleagues Ellie Chowns and Liz Harvey. I would like to reiterate our severe concerns regarding the delays in the LEP providing funding agreements to enable projects agreed by the Board in March this year to proceed, concerns which you share.

The draft funding agreement for the Hereford Enterprise Zone project was issued on Wednesday last week, and the one for Ross Enterprise Park arrived after our meeting on Friday afternoon. These agreements have taken over four months to prepare even in draft form, and have injected a significant risk to project delivery. It is not the first time there have been delays caused to our projects by delays in putting funding agreements in place quickly following decisions being made.

Whilst I expect the Hereford Enterprise Zone project to still be capable of proceeding, the delay in the LEP issuing the funding agreement for the Ross Enterprise Park project means that it is no longer deliverable within the funding constraints requiring all grant to be defrayed by 31 March 2020.

This is hugely disappointing.

I remain very concerned about this aspect of the performance and governance of the LEP and appreciate the assurances given at the meeting that you are seeking to address these issues urgently. I am sure that you will provide a report on progress in this area at the next Board, with particular reference to recent urgent call for projects received from Robert Jenrick, which have another tight timetable.

I note that at the meeting in the 24<sup>th</sup> March 2020 the Board identified reserve projects for funding in the event that approved projects did not proceed. The Shell Store business incubation project in Hereford is one such reserve.

Given that the Ross Enterprise Park project can no longer proceed, I would ask that approval be sought from the Board to transfer the grant allocated to this project to the Shell Store project (£2.493m).

Herefordshire Council officers can offer up a number of alternative projects which are capable of delivering economic benefits and can be completed in the remaining 8 month funding window. My officers are ready to discuss these alternative options as soon as is convenient to you.

I would be grateful if you could arrange for your officers to be in touch with convenient dates for detailed discussions and that you arrange for the LEP Board to consider this matter as soon as is practicable.

Yours sincerely

**COUNCILLOR DAVID HITCHINER**  
**LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

C.c. Gill Hamer