

Minutes of Marches Growth Hub Steering Group 4th June 2020

Present			
Paul Hinkins PH Marches Growth Hub Chair, Marches LI		Marches Growth Hub Chair, Marches LEP Board Deputy Chair	
Frank Myers MBE FM		LEP Board Member, Chair of Herefordshire Business Board – Director MCP Systems Consultants Ltd	
Colin Preece	СР	Marches Skills Provider Network Executive Officer	
Amy Bould	AB	Marches LEP PR & Marketing, Director Be Bold Media Ltd	
Maisy Owen MO		Chamber Member - Chair of Members Committee, Director MO Management Consultancy Ltd	
Beth Heath	th Heath BH Shropshire Business Board Representative, Director Shropshire Festivals, Director Shropshire Think Tank		
Hollie Whittles	HW	Federation of Small Businesses - Area Lead Shropshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire and Director FraggleWorks	
Steve Havins			
Nick Webster	NW	Herefordshire Council - Economic Development Manager	
Matt Potts	MP	Shropshire Council, Shropshire Council Business Growth and Inward Investment Manager	
Kathy Mulholland	nolland KM Telford & Wrekin Council - Inward Investment & Business Support Service Delivery Manager		
Yasmin Sulaman	YS	Marches LEP Business Support Project Officer	
Kathryn Jones	n Jones KJ Marches LEP Partnership Manager		

Apologies:

Oliver Hindle - Marches Are Lead – Cities and Local Growth Unit, BEIS

Not Present: Katharine Clough, University of Wolverhampton, Director – External Relations

ITEM		ACTION
1.	Welcome and Introductions	
	PH welcomed Steering Group (SG) Members and guest speaker to the Team call meeting. YS confirmed apologies.	
2.	Declarations of Member Interest	
	No declarations of interest were noted in relation to any agenda item.	
3.	Attendance update	
	Members agreed the attendance reported.	
4.	Minutes of the last meeting and actions	
	Members approved the draft minutes.	

5. Guest Speaker – Poppy Bramford, Policy and Public Affairs Manager, Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce (H & W CC) The guest speaker provided an informative update on the Chamber Q1 Survey and findings from the two recent COVID 19 surveys. H & W Chamber COVID 19 reports to be shared with the group. 6. LEP Update KJ provided an update on the Marches LEP in the following areas: - COVID -19 • The LEP are working with partners and gathering intelligence on Marches LEP economy impact. • Intelligence is being shared into the West Midlands Group of LEP Chairs which then informs the 2 weekly LEP network meetings held with Ministers and senior civil servants from MHCLG and BEIS. • The LEP Chair has been providing regular written reports on the issues impacting on the economy to the Marches MPs including the outcome of the LEP Survey. LEP Board May Meeting • There will be a need to repurpose Marches LIS to become a recovery strategy. • The LEP are working with Midlands Engine who are carrying out research and data collection. The Observatory is commissioning work into the impact on supply chains. Links and further information to be shared with the group. Marches Investment Fund (MIF) Support • £1.58m of MIF agreed by the Marches LEB Board to support strategic tourism and other business initiatives affected by the floods and Covid-19 virus. LEP Team • Recruitment still in progress for the Corporate Director post. Interim Corporate Director in place to support Governance. LEP Tender • Accounting and Auditing Services for the Marches LEP https://www.marcheslep.org.uk/about/tenders-vacancies/. Please share with your network. Additional Support from DIT • DIT has been awarded additional funding through the Chancellor's Budget Statement earlier this year to support more international Trade Adviser resources. Discussions are taking place between the LEP and DIT. • SH confirmed the new local END project went live on the 1° Aprili. The project is an export focused support project designed to complement					
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7. MGH Update

YS updated the group on the following areas: -

2019/20 Contract

£205k MGH Core Funding

 The full allocation has been spent. £4,381.96 underspend was paid to the LEP to cover the cost of the January 2020 business supplements (Shropshire Star and Herefordshire Times) and the balance towards KJ's time for supporting the MGH.

Growth Hub Spend

- MGH Shropshire claimed full £12,100 allocation
- MGH Herefordshire claimed full £10,900 allocation
- MGH Telford & Wrekin underclaimed £10,900 allocation/claimed £10,782.13

Additional Business Advisor Funding £31,578.93 to support EU Exit Business Advice

- This funding was split equally between the three physical growth hubs.
- Underspend of £266.74. MGH Telford & Wrekin was not able to claim the full allocation.

West Midlands Cluster Funding £33K to support BREXIT/EU Exit support

- The 3 growth hubs were allocated £7k each and worked with their local Chamber of Commerce to deliver resilience activity in March. The balance was allocated to Be Bold to support PR/Marketing activity, boosted social media and advertorials.
- Underspend of £7,097.50. This was due to the impact of COVID 19 and the need to cancel a scheduled resilience event (MGH Telford & Wrekin in partnership with Shropshire Chamber of Commerce). At the time, Coventry LEP asked the growth hubs not to worry about underspend as they were making a case to BEIS and the accountable body to extend the spend and final claim date. The final claim date was extended to 4th May, but we have no further <u>EU Exit</u> costs to claim. Unfortunately, we were not able to use this funding towards COVID 19 support activity.

KPI Data

• February – March 2020 data in line with flooding and COVID 19 impact. Events shifted from physical to on-line which are being well received.

2019/20 Year-end Report

• Report in progress and will be shared with the group in due course.

2020/21 Contract

- Schedule 1 and 3 for £205k has been authorised be BEIS.
- Awaiting guidance and Schedule 1 & 3 template for Additional £257k growth hub funding. KJ informed the group that paperwork was received at 5pm.
- Coventry LEP have been allocated £80k to support 2020/21 cluster activity. Activity cannot be planned until Coventry receive spend guidance from BEIS.
- YS confirmed the loose spend proposal for the additional growth hub funding and that an e-mail was sent to 3 growth hubs on 13th May confirming this and seeking feedback. Shropshire feedback received to date who agree with the draft proposal.
- YS stressed that careful growth hub planning is required, so that we do not duplicate
 business support already available through partners, our ERDF projects, via the cluster
 moving forward, support that will be delivered using the LA discretionary grant
 allocations and support that will be delivered using the recently announced MIF
 funding. The 3 growth hubs have been asked to work collaboratively and with
 partners where possible.

COVID 19 weekly reporting to BEIS

 The report included in the papers summarised previous weekly reports to BEIS. Group was asked to note % increase of engagement in March 2020 compared to March 2019.

	 PR/Marketing Benchmarking information from BEIS No benchmarking information has been received from BEIS. YS will try and get some insight from similar funded growth hubs for discussion at the next meeting. AB shared a benchmarking document for discussion at the next meeting. 	YS YS
8.	 MGH Steering Group Review Update YS confirmed the following: - Marches LEP have now received legal advice on general agreements. Draft Data Sharing Agreement (DSA) and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between BEIS, NBSH and the Marches LEP can now be picked up and reworked with the support of the interim Corporate Director. Local Partner Service Level Agreement/DSA will be reworked once the above has been finalised. PH confirmed that at the May LEP Board meeting, the board agreed to the alignment of Business Board and LEP terms of reference. PH's position as MLEP deputy chair has now been extended until May 2021. It would therefore make sense for PH to extend MGH Steering Group and MGH Operations Group Chair position until May 2021. PH asked the group for their feedback/agreement. PH left the room and YS asked each member to confirm feedback. At the time, MP had left the meeting to take a call. The group agreed to PH's remaining as Chair until May 2021. 	
9.	 Marketing and Social Media / Google Analytics AB updated the group on February and March 2020 activity and stats including the Marches LEP COVID 19 Impact Survey. HW requested a copy of the Marches LEP Digital Strategy. AB made a request for working safely case studies. AB talked the group through the MGH draft Comms plan. The group requested business support measurable objectives to be added to the plan for approval at the next meeting. 	YS All KJ/YS/AB
10	Reflections & Improvements	YS

MO raised the following

YS

The MGH have issued a notification about exporting to the effect

"Marches Growth Hub is committed to ensuring that its local businesses not only emerge more resilient from this crisis but are also optimally equipped to capitalise on the opportunities presented to them once the 'green light' is given and business can resume.

This webinar is being run by The Export Department as part of its 'RESTART Programme' and is fully funded by Marches Growth Hub. The RESTART programme provides a mixture of coaching and 'hands on' support, uniquely tailored to participating businesses as they prepare to resume trading."

The link provided is

https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/calendar/view/2788 WEBINAR Preparing to RESTAR T your business as COVID-

19 restrictions are lifted Herefordshire Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin businesses

The question raised by Shropshire Chamber is this; the provider of the funded webinar is based in Swindon and not locally or indeed the export department at the Chamber. At no point has the Chamber received a request for the support for this webinar, therefore could clarification be sought on how the procurement of this provider was applied, and who sanctioned the funding from the Marches to be issued to an out of area provider and what was the rationale for their decision?

Response from MGH Telford & Wrekin Growth Hub Manager:

- The event in question wasn't procured we were approached by the company to deliver a one hour recovery webinar for free
- The event information is misleading where it refers to fully funded so understand the Chamber picking up on this as something which was paid for if Wayne can remove on the site we'll make sure our info doesn't include it either
- We are aware of the Chamber events as a growth hub so as well as them being promoted centrally we always refer the Chamber services to our businesses
- These services obviously include the diT delivery through the Chamber
- We also promote the regional diT delivery support and events that are appropriate for our businesses
- I'm not sure whether it's confusing to businesses as there are some other out of area online events that are promoted (like the regional ones) so businesses can choose to access what is right for them which supports our desire to offer businesses a range of opportunities to aid them. Particularly in this difficult time.

I hope this helps; the team only ever want to do what is best for our local businesses.

There was a group discussion around the risks associated with organisations offering free support, due diligence that should be carried out when working with new suppliers, the need to support local partners/providers and the need to avoid duplication of activity. The group asked for the 3 growth hubs to put together a formal process including due diligence when working with new suppliers. This will be raised at the next MGH Operations Group meeting.

YS

 The group agreed to the Chair's suggestion of inviting Richard Sheehan, CEO of Shropshire Chamber of Commerce (in addition to Maisy) and Sharon Smith, CEO of H & W Chamber of Commerce to join the MGH Steering Group.

Future Meeting Dates (quarterly 4.30 – 6.30) Venue or virtual TBC depending on COVID 19 Status	
Thursday 3 September Thursday 10 December	