

**THE MARCHES LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP LIMITED
BOARD MEETING**

Tuesday 23 March 2021

4.00pm – 6.30pm

Remote access via Zoom

AGENDA

Item	Time		Lead	Discussion/ Decision	Paper
1.	4.00 pm	Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest	MT		
2.	4.05 pm	Richard Smith - Group Partnership Manager for West Midlands, Central England and Wales, Department for Work and Pensions	R Smith	Discussion	X
3.	4.30 pm	Minutes of Marches LEP Ltd Board meetings on 26/01/21, on 24/02/21 and Matters Arising	MT/GH		X
4.	4.40 pm	Outcomes of 3 March 2021 Budget and implications for LEPs	GH	Discussion	X
5.	5.05 pm	Local Skills Report	JS	Decision	X
6.	5.25 pm	Inclusive Economy and Diversity Policy and Implementation Plan	SR	Decision	X
7.	5.40pm	South Wye Transport project legal dispute - authority to agree an appropriate resolution	MT/GH	Decision (To follow)	X
8.	5.45 pm	Governance a. Board Member Appointments Panel Report b. Service Level Agreement (SLA) between Marches LEP and Shropshire Council	IB	Information	X
9.	6.00 pm	<i>Confidential Item</i> Update on 2020/21 spend for Local Growth Fund (LGF) and Getting Building Fund (GBF)	NA	Information/ Discussion (To follow)	X
10.	6.15 pm	Report from Performance Risk & Monitoring Committee (PRMC) meeting on 25 February 2021	SR/IB	Information	X
11.	6.25 pm	LEP Chair and CEO Report	GH	Information	X
12.	6.30 pm	Any Other Business			

Date of next Marches LEP Ltd Board meeting – 25 May 2021 at 4.00pm

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Item 3a

**Draft Minutes of the Marches LEP Ltd Board Meeting
26 January 2021 at 4.00pm
Meeting held via Zoom
(Company Number: 11822614)**

Present:			
Mandy Thorn MBE DL	MT	Chair, Marches LEP Board	
Sonia Roberts	SR	Deputy Chair Marches LEP Board; Social Inclusion Champion; CEO Landau Limited	
Frank Myers MBE	FM	Herefordshire Business Board Chair	
Paul Hinkins	PH	Telford Business Board Chair	
Andrew Manning Cox	AMC	Hereford Enterprise Zone Chair	
Cllr David Hitchiner	DH	Leader, Herefordshire Council	
Cllr Peter Nutting	PN	Leader, Shropshire Council (part of meeting)	
Cllr David Wright	DW	Cabinet Member for Economy, Housing, Transport and Infrastructure, Telford & Wrekin Council	
Paul Kalinauckas	PK	Access to Finance Champion	
James Staniforth	JS	Skills Advisory Panel Chair; Principal and CEO of the Shrewsbury Colleges Group (part of meeting)	
Sara Williams	SW	Marketing Manager - Northern Europe, Protolabs	
Dr Catherine Baxter	CB	Higher Education Champion; University Secretary, Harper Adams University (part of meeting)	
Christine Snell	CS	Business Partner, AJ & CI Snell (part of meeting)	
In Attendance:			
James Walton	JW	Section 151 Officer, Shropshire Council	
Roger Allonby	RA	Head of Economic Development, Herefordshire Council	
Mark Barrow	MB	Executive Director for Place, Shropshire Council	
Katherine Kynaston	KK	Director Housing Economy & Infrastructure, Telford & Wrekin Council	
Ollie Hindle	OH	Assistant Director, West Midlands & South West, Cities & Local Growth Unit, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	
Chris Taylor	CT	Broadband Manager, Shropshire Council	
Tim Yair	TY	Regional Senior Energy Projects Officer, Midlands Energy Hub	
Gill Hamer	GH	Chief Executive, Marches LEP	
Ilia Bowles	IB	Director of Corporate Services, Marches LEP	
Kathryn Jones	KJ	Partnership Manager, Marches LEP	
Nick Alamanos	NA	Programme Manager, Marches LEP	
Ennis Vingoe	EV	Marches LEP Executive Assistant	
Wayne Redge	WR	Marches LEP Office Administrator	
ITEM			ACTION
1.	1. Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest MT welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting. MT also welcomed Chris Taylor and Tim Yair who would be providing briefings later in the meeting and Andy Begley, Chief Executive of Shropshire Council; Tracy Darke, Assistant Director for Economy and Place at Shropshire Council; Will Westley, member of the Telford & Wrekin Business Board and Amy Bould from Be Bold Media as observers. Apologies were received from Ruth Shepherd. MT noted that the meeting was being recorded to aid the production of the minutes. 2. Declarations of Interest		

	<p>The Chair said that the guidance produced by Sharpe Pritchard regarding members' conflicts of interests had been re-circulated and reminded members to complete the form that had been distributed for any specific Declarations of Interest for this meeting.</p> <p>JS – declared an interest in Item 6 (1) Risk 1 as Principal of Shrewsbury Colleges Group.</p> <p>PH - declared an interest in Item 6 (1) Risk 1 as Chair of Telford College Board of Governors.</p>	
2.	<p>Minutes of the Marches LEP Ltd Board meeting held on 24 November 2021</p> <p>The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 November 2021 were approved and would be signed (electronically) by the Chair as a true and accurate record of the meeting.</p> <p>Matters Arising</p> <p>KK gave a brief update on the Telford Towns Fund. The proposal had been submitted and feedback was expected in early March 2021.</p> <p>RA said that the Hereford Investment Plan would be submitted on 28 January 2021, with feedback likely in April/May.</p> <p>MT thanked FM for his work as the Marches LEP Board representative on the Hereford Town Fund Board.</p>	EV
3.	<p>Governance</p> <p>a. Notice advising the resignation of P Bennett.</p> <p>MT advised the Board that Paul Bennett had stood down as the Chair of the Shropshire Business Board on 31 December 2020, and in accordance with the Articles of Association section 21.3.1, as a director of Marches LEP Ltd. A successor had been elected but unfortunately, they were now unable to take up the role. The process to elect a new Chair should be completed soon.</p> <p>MT would write to PB to thank him for his contribution during his tenure as a member of the Marches LEP Board.</p> <p>b. Annual Review of the Marches LEP Board Terms of Reference (TORs), Articles of Association and Accountability and Assurance Framework</p> <p>IB updated members on the work that had been undertaken to update the TORs and Articles of Association and ensure that they were consistent with each other and the Accountability and Assurance Framework. The documents had been widely circulated and no significant comments had been received.</p> <p>The Board approved the revised Marches LEP Board's TORs and Articles of Association (unanimous).</p> <p>The revised Articles of Association would be sent to Companies House.</p> <p>A similar process of review had been undertaken for the Accountability and Assurance Framework in order to remove any repetitions/discrepancies and ensure consistency with the TORs and Articles, and the National Local Growth Assurance Framework for LEPs. The Accountability and Assurance Framework had also been reviewed by the Assurance Team in the Government's Local Growth Team.</p> <p>The Board approved the revised Marches LEP Accountability and Assurance Framework (unanimous)</p> <p>IB said that the approach to managing the rotation of Board membership had also been considered. In line with the Board TORs, the Chair would set up a Board Member Appointments Panel to include 3 Board members. The meeting would take place in February and the Panel would present their recommendations to the Board meeting in March 2021.</p> <p>The Board noted the intended approach to manage MLEP Board membership rotation.</p>	<p>MT</p> <p>IB, EV</p> <p>IB</p> <p>MT</p>

	<p>c. LEP Annual Performance Review (APR) meeting – Tuesday 9 February 2021 The outcomes of the review would be reported to the Board following the meeting. The Board noted the arrangements for the 2020/21 APR and Annex A, APR Preparation.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>Presentation - Energy White Paper and support for meeting net zero targets (CS and JS joined the meeting) Tim Yair gave a presentation to the Board. The main points covered were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rapidly changing energy landscape including the opportunities available in the Marches e.g. investment in infrastructure surrounding the electricity network. • The Energy White paper – delivered in December 2020. Transformational changes needed in the electricity system and there will be a fundamental shift in domestic heating from gas to electricity. • Marches Energy Strategy – largest change since its launch in 2019 was that the 3 local authorities were developing local action plans to work towards their aims of ‘net zero’. • Key issues for the Marches – engage and influence in the interests of the Marches and work to resolve the differences between national and local targets. <p>Board members discussed issues raised in the presentation. It was proposed that a member of the Marches LEP Board become the LEP Energy Champion. TY said the Energy Strategy Steering Group was keen to have more direct interaction with the Board. It was suggested that the co-opting of a member of the Steering Group to the LEP Board may be a way forward as specialist skills and knowledge was required. TY would develop a response to the White Paper and take forward the Energy Strategy action plan.</p> <p>The presentation would be circulated to Board members. MT thanked TY for his presentation.</p>	<p>GH, TY TY EV</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Presentation - Digital Strategy Delivery and roll out of broadband update Chris Taylor gave a presentation to the Board. The main points covered were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The connectivity in the Marches compared to the national broadband target of 95% in the UK – over 92% in Herefordshire; 94% in Shropshire and 98% in Telford & Wrekin for superfast broadband. Less positive figures for Gigabit provision. • Growth Deal funding – from this 80,000 homes and 5000 businesses had been connected in the Marches • Current deployments – Government aimed to get 80% of UK ‘Gigabit capable broadband’ from commercial provision. The funding had been secured for this but there were some concerns regarding this aspiration and what the procurement would look like across the Marches geography. • Digital Strategy – the work plan will be brought back to the Board • 5G and Mobile – roll out remained a concern in many areas of the Marches and that it was unlikely to address all the current connectivity issues. The Shared Rural Network project (4G mobile broadband) should however address this. <p>Board members discussed the points highlighted in the presentation. MT asked CT to specify the support required from the Board to move things forward. MT thanked CT for his presentation which would be circulated to members.</p>	<p>CT CT EV</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Performance Risk & Monitoring Committee (PRMC) – report from the meeting on 17 December 2020</p>	

<p>MT noted the declarations of interest for this item from JS and PH. SR thanked the members of PRMC for all their support and updated Board members on the Committee's activities.</p> <p>Marches LEP Business Continuity Plan (BCP) SR said that the BCP was a new document describing the protocols to be adopted which would enable the Marches LEP to return to 'business as usual' following a disaster. The Board approved the newly developed Marches LEP Business Continuity Plan (10 for; 2 abstentions)</p> <p>Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Shropshire Council AMC asked if further work was still to be undertaken on the document. IB confirmed that the document was still at a draft stage and indicated the areas that were still in discussion. SR asked members to forward any further comments on the SLA to IB as soon as possible. MT proposed that the current draft of the SLA be noted rather than approved. The Board agreed to note the latest draft Service Level Agreement (SLA) for future service with Shropshire Council.</p> <p>(CB joined the meeting)</p> <p>Risk Registers <i>(Post-meeting note: The Programme Risk Register had been incorrectly referred to as the Project Risk Register in the paper. It is referred to as the Programme Risk Register in these minutes).</i></p> <p>SR drew members' attention to the changes to the Strategic Risk Register detailed in the paper. The Board noted the changes made to the Strategic Risk Register.</p> <p>SR said that two new risks would be added to the Programme Risk Register. It was anticipated that a number of projects would struggle to meet their skills outputs which may lead to contract variations being required. The Marches Centre for Manufacturing and Technology (MCMT) was one of these. SR said that she wanted to reassure the Board that a full due diligence process had been undertaken on the proposal to vary the MCMT contract. JS raised concerns as a Board member and representative of the College Principals in Shropshire regarding the variation to the contract with MCMT and the potential effect this may have on outputs from existing providers in the area. A wide-ranging discussion took place regarding the proposed move of the MCMT training provision from Bridgnorth to Telford and Shrewsbury and whether the LEP contract with MCMT prohibits this. MT proposed that a paper providing more detail on the contract variation and the implications of the change in location of the training provision be produced and that a further confidential discussion regarding the proposed contract variation take place at an emergency Board meeting in mid-February 2021. The Board agreed to further discuss the issue at an emergency Board meeting (unanimous).</p> <p>The Board noted the other risk to be added to the MLEP Programme Risk Register.</p>	<p>All</p> <p>GH</p>
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<p>7.</p>	<p>Progress report on project spend of Local Growth Fund (LGF) & Getting Building Fund (GBF) NA updated the Board on delivering both the Local Growth Fund and Getting Building Fund projects.</p> <p>The Board noted the current position relating to the Getting Building Fund Programme, as set out in section 1 of the paper.</p> <p>The Board noted the current position relating to Local Growth Fund Programme including an updated spend position relating to NMITE Phase 2, the Primary Care project at the Tannery and the Capitalisation (Programme Management) projects, as set out in sections 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 of the paper.</p> <p>The Board noted the potential underspend position relating to the Local Growth Fund Programme, as set out in section 2.4 of the paper.</p> <p>NA said that the LEP faced challenges in ensuring that projects within the programmes met their contractual spend requirements. The LEP Team continued to work closely with project promoters in respect to mitigating risk, seeking assurances from projects through open dialogue, including formal monitoring visits. However, should any projects determine that they were unable to spend in the required timeframe, it would be necessary for the Board to discuss the next steps. The Board agreed to the scheduling of an Emergency LEP Board Meeting in the week commencing 15 February 2021, at the earliest (12 for, 1 abstention).</p> <p>The Board noted the update on the clawback of the £3.8m for the South Wye Project, as set out in section 4 of the paper.</p>	
<p>8.</p>	<p>LEP Chair/CEO report MT directed members to the information in the report.</p>	
<p>9.</p>	<p>Any Other Business FM – wished it to be noted that it had been agreed that the MIF projects spend period had been extended to July 2021 and thanked the LEP. MT thanked LA colleagues for their continued work on the assessment of and distribution of COVID grants.</p>	
<p>10.</p>	<p>Close The meeting closed at 6.23pm.</p>	
	<p>Next Meeting of the Board of The Marches LEP Limited: Tuesday 23 March 2021</p>	

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Minutes of the Marches LEP Ltd Emergency Board Meeting (redacted) 24 February 2021 at 2.00pm Meeting held via Zoom (Company Number: 11822614)		
Present:		
Mandy Thorn MBE DL	MT	Chair, Marches LEP Board
Sonia Roberts	SR	Deputy Chair Marches LEP Board; Equality and Diversity Champion; CEO Landau Limited
Frank Myers MBE	FM	Herefordshire Business Board Chair
Paul Hinkins	PH	Telford Business Board Chair
Beth Heath	BH	Shropshire Business Board Chair
Cllr Ellie Chowns	EC	Cabinet Member for Environment, Economy and Skills, Herefordshire Council
Cllr Peter Nutting	PN	Leader, Shropshire Council
Cllr David Wright	DW	Cabinet Member for Economy, Housing, Transport and Infrastructure, Telford & Wrekin Council
Paul Kalinauckas	PK	Access to Finance Champion
James Staniforth	JS	Skills Advisory Panel Chair; Principal and CEO of the Shrewsbury Colleges Group
Sara Williams	SW	Marketing Manager - Northern Europe, Protolabs
Christine Snell	CS	Business Partner, AJ & CI Snell
In Attendance:		
James Walton	JW	Section 151 Officer, Shropshire Council
Richard Ball	RB	Director for Economy and Place, Herefordshire Council
Mark Barrow	MB	Executive Director for Place, Shropshire Council
Katherine Kynaston	KK	Director Housing Economy & Infrastructure, Telford & Wrekin Council
Nick Francis	ME	Deputy Head, West Midlands & South West, Cities & Local Growth Unit, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (part of meeting)
Clare Hannah	CH	Deputy Area Lead, West Midlands & South West, Cities & Local Growth Unit, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
Tim Smith	TS	Assistant Director - Commercial Services (Project Executive Tannery)
Gill Hamer	GH	Chief Executive, Marches LEP
Ilia Bowles	IB	Director of Corporate Services, Marches LEP
Kathryn Jones	KJ	Partnership Manager, Marches LEP
Nick Alamanos	NA	Programme Manager, Marches LEP
Lisa Ashby	LA	Project Officer, Marches LEP
Ennis Vingoe	EV	Executive Assistant, Marches LEP
Wayne Redge	WR	Office Administrator, Marches LEP
ITEM		ACTION
1.	1. Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest MT welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular BH who was welcomed to her first Board meeting. Apologies were received from Andrew Manning Cox, Ruth Shepherd and Catherine Baxter. Cllr Ellie Chowns was attending the meeting in Cllr David Hitchiner's stead. MT noted that the meeting was being recorded to aid the production of the minutes. The meeting was not being held in public due to the confidential nature of the agenda items.	

	<p>2. Declarations of Interest The Chair reminded members to complete the form that had been distributed for any specific Declarations of Interest for this meeting. JS – declared an interest in Item 3 as Principal of Shrewsbury Colleges Group. PH - declared an interest in Item 3 as Chair of Telford College Board of Governors. PN - declared an interest in Items 3 and 4 as Leader of Shropshire Council. The Chair confirmed that members with a conflict of interest for a specific agenda item would not be entitled to vote on that particular item.</p>	
<p>2.</p>	<p>Governance Resolution - appointment of new private sector director To confirm the appointment of Beth Heath, in her role as Chair of Shropshire Business Board as a Director of Marches LEP Ltd. The Board confirmed the appointment of Beth Heath as a Director of Marches LEP Ltd (Unanimous).</p>	<p>EV</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Confidential Item Marches Centre of Manufacturing and Technology (MCMT) project The Board discussed a proposed contract variation of the Marches LEP contract with MCMT and an extension to the delivery time to March 2022. The variation and extension would allow the project to deliver the original outputs. The Board approved the implementation of a contract variation of the LEP contract with MCMT (Unanimous) The Board approved an extension to the outputs' delivery time to March 2022 (Unanimous) The Board agreed that the LEP would facilitate meetings between MCMT and other providers and that MCMT should be asked to seek opportunities to meaningfully collaborate with the FE College Principals from the Marches on their plans for training provision in Telford and Shrewsbury (Unanimous)</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>Confidential Item a. Getting Building Fund The Board noted the current position relating to the Getting Building Fund Programme. The Board discussed a proposal to utilise Marches Investment Fund (MIF) as a cashflow facility, ensuring the LEP was able to meet its contractual commitments with projects, therefore not compromising delivery. The Board approved the utilisation of the Marches Investment Fund as a cashflow facility for the Getting Building Fund, ensuring the LEP was able to meet its contractual commitments during the 2020/21 Financial Year (Unanimous) b. Local Growth Fund (LGF) 1) LGF Current Position The Board noted the current position relating to the Local Growth Fund Programme. 2) Project Change Request</p>	

	<p>The Board discussed a project change request which would enable the project to respond to changing market demands.</p> <p>The Board approved the change request (11 For; 1 Abstention)</p> <p>3) Project Revised Proposal The Board discussed a revised project proposal, reprofiling and reordering the existing funding. Two options were presented. Concerns were expressed in relation to additionality and value for money.</p> <p>The LEP Board rejected both options (Option 1: 1 For, 7 Against, 3 Abstentions; Option 2: 4 For, 5 Against, 2 Abstentions)</p> <p>The project promoter confirmed that they would be able to deliver the original contracted outputs for the project.</p> <p>Members discussed the potential LGF outturn position in the light of the rejection of the revised proposal. The decision taken would see the LEP in an overall overspend position of nearly £90k (based on current project estimates), enabling the programme to utilise the loan repayments from the MIF.</p>	
5.	<p>Any Other Business Nil</p>	
6.	<p>Close The meeting closed at 4.00pm.</p>	
	<p>Next Meeting of the Board of The Marches LEP Limited: Tuesday 23 March 2021</p>	

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Meeting date:	23 March 2021				
Agenda Item:	4				
Item Subject:	Outcomes of 3 March 2021 Budget & implications for LEPs				
For:	Discussion	X	Decision		Information
Purpose of the paper:					
To provide an overview of the outcomes of the Budget on 3 March and the implications for the future role of LEPs.					
Summary of recommendations:					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To note the content of this paper and provide feedback at the Board meeting. 					
Main points (recommendations to be highlighted in bold at the end of each section as required):					
<p>In the Budget on 3 March the following was announced about three new funding pots to support economic growth and “Levelling Up “of the UK economy. For England these new funds will replace the Local Growth Fund (LGF) and Getting Building Fund (GBF) which have been managed by LEPs for the past 8 years. The three new funds are as follows: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Levelling Up Fund - which applies to the whole of the UK. It brings together the Department for Transport, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the Treasury to invest £4.8 billion in high value local infrastructure. 1 Yr. UK Community Renewal Fund - £220m (a pilot for the programme called UK Shared Prosperity Fund - the proposed successor funds for the EU Structural Investment Funds). Community Ownership Fund – details yet to be released. <p>The above three funds will be managed by Local Authorities. Please follow the link to the details on the funds at https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/new-levelling-up-and-community-investments</p> <p>As already advised in an email to you on 4 March 2021, the following statement was made in the Budget about the future of LEPs:</p> <p><i>“We will also be working with local businesses on the future role of Local Enterprise Partnerships. We want to ensure local businesses have clear representation and support in their area, in order to drive the recovery. We will work with Local Enterprise Partnerships over the coming months, with a view to announcing more detailed plans ahead of summer recess. This will also include consideration of Local Enterprise Partnership geographies.”</i></p> <p>It should be noted that LEPs were also bypassed in the skills for jobs white paper launched in January 2021. This proposed that new local skills improvement plans created by employers, colleges and training providers should “build on the work” mayoral combined authorities and LEPs currently do through skills advisory panels, which bring together employers, skills providers and local government to match skills supply with employer demand locally.</p> <p>However, it should be noted that Robert Jenrick MP, Secretary of State for Communities told council representatives on a ministerial call recently that:</p> <p><i>“There remain important roles and responsibilities for LEPs in ensuring that there is a strong voice for the business community in their own area.”</i></p>					

In the same call the Secretary of State revealed that he is working with Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng MP on “how we can reform LEPs moving forwards”, as he encouraged councils designing bids for the levelling up fund to engage LEPs “to come up with proposals that they think really meet the needs and approval of their local business community.”

Please see the link to the Ministerial webinar on 5 March 2021 with council leaders, chief executives and council group leaders:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1R987dg3LCptPF-GBtg-M0LvU2I-hSVMj/view>

On 5 March 2021, the LEP Network Chairs and CEOs met with senior civil servants from MHCLG and BEIS to agree next steps. The key messages flowing from that discussion were:

- The political landscape has fundamentally shifted, and this is influencing how capital funds will be allocated post LGF and GBF.
- This shift is in no way as a consequence of the quality of LEPs’ governance, delivery or strategy capabilities.
- The shift does, however, provide an opportunity to revisit current and future LEP activity, as well as looking at the post-covid priorities of HMG. The wording civil servants are using is “evolution and not extinction” of LEPs.
- In doing that, the role that LEPs play in presenting a business voice for capital programmes is respected as is our role in skills, Growth Hubs, business support, etc.

It was agreed the LEP Network will now embark on a joint “review” project with MHCLG and BEIS colleagues, with jointly agreed Terms of Reference (TOR) with the aim of concluding the review by the summer. Paul Scully MP, a Minister in BEIS has been appointed as the lead Minister for this joint work. We expect sight of the draft TOR shortly and understand the LEP review process will include a programme with workstreams covering areas such as LEP geography, business support, skills and innovation and bring together officials and Ministers. All LEPs will be able to get involved. We are also aware that other stakeholders will be asked to feed views into the review i.e. Chambers/FSB/Combined Authorities/Local Authorities etc.

The LEP CEO has briefed all Marches LEP staff on the outcomes of the budget and the possible implications for the Marches LEP. There are concerns about the impact this will have on the LEP Team and the inherent risk that this uncertainty places on the Company.

The information in this report is current at the time of writing this report on 15/03/21. The LEP Chair and CEO will provide a verbal update at the meeting and take questions.

Financial implications: Not clear

Legal implications: Not clear

Risks, opportunities and impacts: This announcement will unsettle LEP employees, and it is unlikely we will get clarity on the matter much before August 2021.

Report author: Gill Hamer, LEP CEO

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Meeting date:	23 March 2021			
Agenda Item:	5			
Item Subject:	Local Skills Report (Skills Advisory Panel)			
For:	Discussion		Decision	X
				Information

<p>Purpose of the Paper:</p> <p>To update the Marches LEP Board on the purpose and content of the Marches Local Skills Report</p>
<p>Summary of Recommendations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To note the purpose of the Marches Local Skills Report. 2. To endorse the priorities of the Local Skills Report to enable formal submission to the Department for Education in line with local governance requirements and publication on the Marches LEP website.
<p>Main points (recommendations to be highlighted in bold at the end of each section as required):</p> <p>Purpose of the Marches Local Skills Report</p> <p>The Marches Skills Advisory Panel (SAP) is a subgroup of the LEP Board that brings together skills providers and employers. Its role is to improve understanding of current and future skills needs so that local skills provision better matches local employment opportunities and employers' needs.</p> <p>The Marches LEP secured £75k in 2020/21 from the Department for Education (DfE) to enable the SAP to develop and update its data and research base for use by partners. This funding has been used to update analysis of skills needs and demand, potential growth areas, labour market challenges and sector specific opportunities. It has also been used to provide evidence on how this information has been used by the SAP to shape local training provision and curriculum planning across the Marches .</p> <p>Within the DfE funding, the Marches LEP is required to produce a Local Skills Report for submission to DfE by the end of March 2021. Following a procurement exercise, Hatch Associates was commissioned to undertake an independent review of the SAP and to write the Local Skills Report. In addition, the Black Country Consortium has been procured to support the SAP and provide additional data support for the Local Skills Report and economic recovery planning.</p> <p>Each SAP's Local Skills Report is required to provide skills information in a consistent way to DfE in order to feed intelligence into central government and the national Skills and Productivity Board (SPB). This is an expert committee providing independent, evidence-based advice to ministers at DfE on matters relating to skills and their contribution to productivity.</p> <p>Each Local Skills Report is required to have an annex of core indicators to provide an overview of relevant skills-related data. Prior to submission to DfE, the report must be signed off by the SAP Chair and other relevant parties, i.e. the Marches LEP Board, in accordance with local governance structures.</p> <p>Recommendation 1 – to note the purpose of the Marches Local Skills Report.</p>

Local Skills Report Priorities

The report (see links [The Marches Local Skills Report](#) and [Appendices A and B](#)) has been developed to meet the DfE requirements and comprises evidence based commentary on skills strengths and needs, skills strategy and a skills action plan. It has been developed through extensive consultation with partners and carried out independently of the Marches LEP team, in order to gather examples of good practice and identify areas where SAP membership and operations may be improved.

- The action plan includes work to be led by the SAP and carried out by the Marches LEP team within its £75k DfE allocation for 2021/22.
- It also includes strategic interventions to be championed by the SAP and to be delivered by SAP partners to address issues identified through local data and research.

Recommendation 2 - To endorse the priorities of the Local Skills Report to enable formal submission to the Department for Education in line with local governance requirements and publication on the Marches LEP website.

Financial implications:

The investment in data and research and in the consultancy support to review the SAP and compile the Local Skills Report has been completed within the 2020/21 DfE funds secured for this purpose.

The Local Skills Report contains priority actions to be undertaken by the LEP using DfE funds which are anticipated for 2021/22.

The Local Skills Report contains priority actions to be undertaken by SAP partners to meet needs identified through the data and research. These are dependent on SAP partners being able to secure/direct funding towards these priorities.

Legal implications:

The submission of a Local Skills Report to DfE by end of March 2021 is a condition of the funding received from DfE as agreed in a Memorandum of Understanding.

Risks, opportunities and impacts:

1. Risk – a lack of clarity over the availability of funding for SAP partners to take forward priority actions risks damaging the Marches LEP's reputation.
2. Opportunity - having a robust data and research base highlighting local skills needs and labour market issues enables all SAP partners to develop evidence-led project proposals for submission to funding agencies.

Equality implications:

The Local Skills Plan is predicated on independent data and research which includes demographic, skills and employment statistics. This baseline information is designed for use in shaping interventions to raise skills levels, increase employability and improve the quality of local jobs.

Additional information:

Consultation and engagement have been undertaken with all SAP members including, but not limited to, the three business boards, both Chambers of Commerce, FSB, higher and further

education institutions, private training providers, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Education and Skills Funding Agency and others.

Report Author:

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Background papers/documents:

Publicly available data and research, included that funded by the DfE, may be found on the Marches LEP website at <https://www.marcheslep.org.uk/about/data-research/>

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Meeting date:	23 March 2021				
Agenda item:	6				
Item subject:	Marches LEP Inclusive Economy and Diversity Policy				
For:	Discussion		Decision	X	Information

<p>Purpose of the paper: To update the Board on the development of the Marches LEP’s Inclusive Economy and Diversity Policy and relating Implementation Plan.</p>
<p>Summary of recommendations: That Board Members approve the Marches LEP’s Inclusive Economy and Diversity Policy and relating Implementation Plan.</p>
<p>Main points (recommendations to be highlighted in bold at the end of each section as required):</p> <p>In September 2020, the Board appointed Sonia Roberts, LEP Deputy Chair, to be its Diversity Champion and she has since developed an Inclusive Economy and Diversity Policy and relating Implementation Plan.</p> <p>As highlighted in the policy, the Marches LEP’s vision is for the Marches to have a strong, diverse, inclusive and enterprising business base, operating in an exceptional and connected environment, where the transfer of technology and skills fosters innovation, investment and economic growth. To achieve this vision, the Marches LEP will be working with local partners, stakeholders and the business community to identify barriers to growth. In particular, the Marches LEP is committed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure its workforce reflects the diversity of the Marches. • Embed equality into the heart of its business planning and day to day operations. • Ensure its diverse communities, particularly the most disadvantaged people, benefit from the vision to deliver sustainable economic growth. • Support the development of diverse markets, workforce and suppliers, across the Marches’ economy in particular through working with key employers, business, voluntary and community sector and skills providers. • Drive its work to reduce inequalities across the Marches. • Have a governance structure that holds the organisation to account, ensuring that benefits are achieved from mainstreaming equalities across all of its work. • Utilise its evidence base and ensure equality is built into data collection, analysis and reporting of economic trends affecting the Marches, to inform its work on economic development. • Monitor, review and revise equality measures and objectives to analyse the impact of its work on the Marches businesses, communities and workforce. • Comply with equalities legislation and pay due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty. • Set a broad range of targets to ensure it is meeting the needs of diverse communities and achieving a broadly representative workforce. • Ensure all business have equal access to opportunities on offer in order to have a diverse supplier market that supports and works in partnership to meet its strategic objectives. <p>Any actions identified to achieve this vision are included in the Implementation Plan. A report on progress will be presented to the Marches Board in November.</p> <p>Recommendation – <i>That Board Members approve the LEP Inclusive Economy and Diversity Policy and relating Implementation Plan.</i></p>

Financial implications: None
Legal implications: None
Risks, opportunities and impacts: To ensure the Marches LEP Board is as representative as possible of the community it serves maintaining an appropriate range and balance of geographical representation, gender, skills, experience and background. Female Board members currently account for 50% of the LEP Board membership.
Equality implications: To support the development of diverse markets, workforces and suppliers across the Marches LEP's economy, in particular through working with key employers, business, voluntary and community sector and skills providers.
Additional information/ attachments: Appendix 1 - Marches LEP's Inclusive Economy and Diversity Policy and relating Implementation Plan
Background papers/documents: None
Report Author: Ilia Bowles, LEP Director of Corporate Services

Marches Local Enterprise Partnership Limited

Inclusive Economy and Diversity Policy and Implementation Plan

March 2021

Version History

Version No.	Date Issued	Summary of Changes
Version 1.0	23 March 2021	Document presented to the Marches LEP Board for approval

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1. Inclusive growth

The Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is focused on developing an inclusive and dynamic economy; for us this means becoming the home of ambition and opportunity for all.

We believe in opportunity for all, regardless of their gender, religion, age, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, removing the barriers which make it difficult for people to take up employment and training opportunities. We want to empower our people with the skills and resources they need to take ownership of their futures and secure good jobs with fair living wages.

We want residents to own their economic future and all young people to have high aspirations, with support to enable them to make good choices. We will work to increase the earnings, qualifications levels and progression routes accessible to local residents so that every resident has the tools and confidence to access the higher skilled jobs in future.

Our vision for the Marches is that we are an inclusive place that enables residents from our communities to thrive and develop with quality jobs offering good wages, training and progression. We know business people, local authorities, education and third sector organisations in the Marches are committed to working together to invest in the prosperity of our workforce and residents.

2. What success will look like

We are focused on narrowing the gap both between the area and the national average (outside London) and within the area to promote equality, diversity and inclusion reduce inequality; this includes:

- **Closing the gap on average earnings:** Increasing the earnings, qualifications levels and progression routes for local residents will be an important issue as an inclusive economy to ensure residents have access to new higher skilled jobs in future.
- **Closing the unemployment gap:** Remove the barriers which make it difficult for our people to take up employment and training opportunities.
- **Closing the skills and education gap:** Through good schools and colleges, make sure our young people have the skills, experience and qualifications to take up and access quality training and jobs.
- **Closing the aspiration and ambition gap:** So that local people own their own economic future and all young people to have high aspirations and confidence, with support to enable them to make good choices.

3. Context

LEPs are private sector led partnerships between local authorities and businesses set up in 2010 by the former Department of Business, Innovation and Skills to help determine local economic priorities and lead economic growth and job creation within the regions.

The Marches LEP is the business-led organisation which drives economic growth across Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin by combining the best entrepreneurial instincts of the private sector with the knowledge, resources and infrastructure of the public sector.

The Marches LEP works in partnership with central Government to ensure the Marches region is getting a fair share of funding to deliver projects to achieve its objectives.

4. The Marches LEP vision

Our vision for the Marches is of a strong, diverse, inclusive and enterprising business base, operating in an exceptional and connected environment, where the transfer of technology and skills fosters innovation, investment and economic growth.

To achieve this vision, we are working with local partners, stakeholders and the business community to identify barriers to growth.

We are prioritising projects which will help remove those barriers and drive growth.

The Marches LEP values the diversity of the region's communities and recognises this as a huge asset that should be harnessed to provide a competitive advantage and drive the growth required.

The Marches LEP also recognises that to achieve its vision, bringing benefits to all our communities, it is essential that the LEP Board represents the diverse population of the region, and embraces the benefits this will bring in improving creativity, productivity and innovation. The Marches LEP also recognises the importance of embedding its vision in its policies and procedures.

5. What are Equality and Diversity?

Equality is ensuring every individual or groups of individuals **have an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents** and are not treated differently or less favourably, on the basis of race, gender, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation and age.

Diversity aims to recognise, respect and value how people's differences contribute to society and support them in realising their full potential by promoting an inclusive culture for all.

5.1 Legal Context - Equality Act 2010, Equality Duty and Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012

The Equality Act 2010 places a public duty on the Marches LEP with which it must comply. It states that everyone has the right to be treated fairly and places legislation around nine protected characteristics: age, disability (including mental ill health), gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 requires those who commission public services to think about how they can also secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits.

When making economic policy decisions the Marches LEP will pay due regard to the Equality Act 2010, general duties under the Public Sector Equality Duties (Annex A) and to the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012.

6. Our commitment

This policy reinforces the Marches LEP's commitment to providing equality and fairness to all those who wish to work with them and to not acting less favourably on the grounds of their protected characteristic. The Marches LEP is opposed to all forms of unlawful, unfair and inappropriate discrimination.

7. How we will fulfil our commitment and meet our responsibilities

7.1 Board composition

Using information collected through publicly available economic data, the Marches LEP will seek to ensure its Board composition reflects the diverse communities of the Region. In determining the optimum composition of the Board, the Marches LEP will also consider areas of expertise and industry knowledge in addition to geographical representation, background, race, gender and other qualities in order to ensure membership is balanced appropriately.

7.2 Board Member Appointments Panel

The Marches LEP Chair will form an Appointments Panel, comprising at least three additional Marches LEP Board Members to manage Members rotation. The Appointments Panel will review and assess Board composition on behalf of the Board and, when recommending new appointments to the Marches LEP Board, will be mindful of achieving the optimum composition to maintain an appropriate range and balance of gender, skills, experience and background. The Appointments Committee will also be as diverse as possible to further promote Marches LEP commitment to diversity.

7.3 Recruitment

The Marches LEP will endeavour to recruit openly and fairly from the Region community so that the Board reflects regional diversity. This measure will be assessed regularly and the results produced for the Board.

The Marches LEP will encourage applications from all diverse backgrounds and;

- will ensure recruitment literature does not contain barriers to employment;
- will promote the Marches LEP's commitment to promote diversity in recruitment application packs and adverts;
- will aim to reach the widest possible candidate pool by using a range of recruitment methods and positive action, for example targeting under- represented groups through social media channels;
- will define the selection criteria in terms of measurable skills, experience, knowledge and personal qualities; and
- will assess candidates against the role specification in a consistent way throughout the process.

7.4 Selection

All Board appointments will be made on merit, in the context of the skills and experience required by the Board as a whole to be effective.

7.5 Equality and Diversity Champion

The Marches LEP will nominate from its number, one member, to act as its champion for Equality and Diversity. The champion, in addition to being a member of the Appointments Committee, will lead on ensuring the Marches LEP Board understands its role in promoting diversity and eliminating discrimination.

7.6 Decision making

As strategies, policies, procedures and programmes of work are developed, the Marches LEP will assess the impact on equality and consider what actions, if any, may be appropriate to improve any identified adverse impacts.

The social, environmental and economic impact and the impact on equality will also be monitored as strategies, policies, procedures and programmes are implemented.

The Marches LEP will be open and transparent and publish all information regarding its progress in meeting its commitments and duties in relation to equality and diversity on its website. The Marches LEP will also make available information that demonstrate how the achievement of its objectives is bringing benefits to all Marches Region communities.

7.7 Partners

The Marches LEP will work with partners to ensure that all commissioning and tendering processes pay due regard to the Equality Act 2010, general duties under the Public Sector Equality Duties (Annex A) and to the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012.

7.8 Stakeholders

The Marches LEP will engage with all stakeholders and strive to be inclusive and transparent in all communications, encouraging consultation and collaboration.

7.9 Board subgroups

The Marches LEP will work to increase diversity not only at Board Member level but also in the membership of its subgroups.

7.10 Training

The Marches LEP will ensure that all members of the Board, its subgroups and all members of the Marches Executive Team undertake regular equality and diversity training.

8. Accountability

The Marches LEP is responsible and accountable for the implementation of this policy and for ensuring diversity issues are addressed by promotion of this policy.

Marches LEP Board members and Marches Executive Team members have a responsibility to challenge any unfair discrimination for reasons covered by equality legislation.

9. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually in line with the review of the Accountability Assurance Framework (AAF) and/or the re-fresh of the Strategic Plan. Any changes will be approved by the Marches LEP Board.

10. Annex A – Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act became law in 2010. It covers everyone in Britain and protects people from discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

General duties under the Public Sector Equality Duties

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic under the Act and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic under the Act and those who do not.

Protected characteristics

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Situations in which you are protected from discrimination

Under the Equality Act you are protected from discrimination:

- when you are in the workplace
- when you use public services like healthcare (for example, visiting your doctor or local hospital) or education (for example, at your school or college)
- when you use businesses and other organisations that provide services and goods (like shops, restaurants, and cinemas)
- when you use transport
- when you join a club or association (for example, your local tennis club)
- when you have contact with public bodies like your local council or government departments

How can you be discriminated against?

There are four main types of discrimination.

1.1.1.1 *Direct discrimination*

This means treating one person worse than another person because of a protected characteristic. For example, a promotion comes up at work. The employer believes that people's memories get worse as they get older so doesn't tell one of his older employees about it, because he thinks the employee wouldn't be able to do the job.

1.1.1.2 Indirect discrimination

This can happen when an organisation puts a rule or a policy or a way of doing things in place which has a worse impact on someone with a protected characteristic than someone without one. For example a local authority is planning to redevelop some of its housing. It decides to hold consultation events in the evening. Many of the female residents complain that they cannot attend these meetings because of childcare responsibilities.

1.1.1.3 Harassment

This means people cannot treat you in a way that violates your dignity, or creates a hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. For example a man with Down's syndrome is visiting a pub with friends. The bar staff make derogatory and offensive comments about him, which upset and offend him.

1.1.1.4 Victimisation

This means people cannot treat you unfairly if you are acting under the Equality Act (like making a complaint of discrimination), or if you are supporting someone else who is doing so. For example, an employee makes a complaint of sexual harassment at work and is dismissed as a consequence.

What else does the Equality Act do?

1.1.1.5 Public Sector Equality Duty

The Equality Act also requires public bodies (like local councils, hospitals, and publicly-funded service providers) to consider how their decisions and policies affect people with different protected characteristics. The public body also should have evidence to show how it has done this.

For example, a local authority wants to improve its local bus service. It carries out a survey of people who use public transport and finds that very few women use buses at night because they are worried about sexual harassment. The local authority decides to work with the police and the transport provider, as well as local residents, to find ways to address this problem and make the bus service more inclusive.

11. Annex B – Implementation Plan

Principle 1 – To work towards ensuring we have a workforce that reflects the diversity of the Marches			
Action	Lead	Frequency	Progress
To ensure all staff have equality and diversity objectives agreed in each performance review and appraisal.	Line Manager	Annually	
To review equality and diversity training needs every 6 months and to identify any gaps in knowledge that need to be addressed.	Line Manager	Bi-annually	
To ensure that any equality and diversity issues are included and addressed at the fortnightly management meetings.	Line Manager	Fortnightly	
To consult and update all job descriptions to ensure that all employees have a duty to promote Marches LEP's Equality and Diversity Policy and proactively seek ways to promote equality in carrying out their day to day responsibilities.	Line Manager/ HR Admin	Ongoing and once implemented, reviewed at end of year performance review	
Principle 2 – To embed equality into the heart of business planning and day to day operations			
Action	Lead	Frequency	Progress
Responsibilities are set out in the employee handbook – these are to be monitored by each line manager on an ongoing basis	Line Manager	Ongoing	
Take action when incidents occur in breach of our policy.	Line Manager/ HR Admin	Ongoing	
Ensure that our equality and diversity statement is included and implemented in all job adverts/ descriptions.	Line Manager/ HR Admin	Ongoing	
Review employee monitoring forms to identify whether there is any significant under-representation. Use this information to specifically target certain audiences when recruiting and review job descriptions in line with this. Incorporate any relevant actions into the implementation plan.	HR Admin	Annually	
Ensure that all employees are offered support if required and reasonable adjustments are considered.	Line Manager/H R Admin	Ongoing	This is discussed as part of the induction process, or if there are any changes that the Marches LEP are made aware of
Principle 3 – To ensure that Marches LEP's diverse communities, particularly the most disadvantaged people, benefit from Marches LEP's vision to deliver sustainable economic growth.			
Action	Lead	Frequency	Progress

Promote the importance of carrying out an equalities analysis (EqA) to all project applicants as part of the development of their proposed application by signposting to sources of data/research. They should also be advised to consider the needs for consultation and involvement of disadvantaged groups to inform their application.	Project Appraiser	Ongoing	
When responsible for appraising projects, ensure that our policy is taken into consideration.	Project Appraiser	Ongoing	
Principle 4 – To support the development across the Marches LEP economy of diverse markets, workforces and suppliers, in particular through working with key employers, business, voluntary and community sector and skills providers			
Action	Lead	Frequency	Progress
Ensure that all external organisations and stakeholders are made aware of and encouraged to adhere to our equality and diversity policy.	Meeting Chairs	Ongoing	
Review where current links lie with diverse stakeholders. Identify gaps and create new links if required.	CEO	Annually	
Principle 5 – To provide leadership as an employer and service provider to drive our work to reduce inequalities across the Marches			
Action	Lead	Frequency	Progress
This policy is to be stored in a central place on our website for all to view to increase awareness.	PR & Comms	Once agreed	
Issue all interested candidates with monitoring forms to assess any employment data gaps in our recruitment advertising.	HR Admin	Ongoing	
Ensure that all those involved in the recruitment and selection process are trained in non-discriminatory selection techniques.	HR Admin	Ongoing	
Review the recruitment and selection policy and procedures.	HR Admin	Ongoing	
Principle 6 – To have a governance structure that holds the organisation to account, ensuring that benefits are achieved from mainstreaming equalities across all of our work			
Action	Lead	Frequency	Progress
Produce a report on progress against the Implementation Plan to the Marches Board. Revise when further measures are identified to ensure providers and staff are taking action to enable equality to be promoted in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty.	Diversity Champion	Annually	
Appoint a Diversity ‘Champion’ at Board level to ensure we are compliant with the Equality Act 2010, including the three main parts of the Public Sector Equality Duty.	LEP Chair/ CEO		Completed in September 2020
Principle 7 – To utilise our evidence base and ensure equality is built into data collection, analysis and reporting of economic trends affecting the Marches to inform our work on economic development			

Action	Lead		
Review our equality and diversity monitoring form to ensure that we are collecting only relevant data.	HR Admin	Ongoing	
Principle 8 – To monitor, review and revise equality measures and objectives to analyse the impact of our work on the Marches businesses, communities and our workforce			
Action	Lead	Frequency	Progress
Undertake regular reviews of the Equality and Diversity monitoring information of applicant enquiries and attendance at workshops/events to identify any under-representation. Take steps to address this, including measures such as improving the accessibility of our communications, venues and provision of advice and guidance.	HR Admin/ Event Organiser	Ongoing	
Ensure an access review is carried out when planning any external located meetings/ events/ workshops in line with the duty to make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010.	Event Organiser	Ongoing	
Ensure that all candidate access and dietary requirements are checked and implemented in advance of any meetings/events/ workshops.	Event Organiser	Ongoing	
Principle 9 – To comply with equalities legislation and pay due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty as a requirement of public sector and EU funding			
Action	Lead	Frequency	Progress
Ensure that our Equality and Diversity policy is kept up to date and compliant.	Director of Corporate Services	Ongoing	
Ensure that this policy is implemented in the day to day working environment.	Line Managers	Ongoing	
Principle 10 – To set a broad range of targets to ensure that we are meeting the needs of diverse communities and achieving a broadly representative workforce			
Action	Lead	Frequency	Progress
Ensure that our equality and diversity plan objectives are embedded in our Business Plan, SAP and any other relevant documents.	CEO	Ongoing	
Principle 11 – To ensure all business have equal access to opportunities offered by the Marches LEP in order to have a diverse supplier market that supports and works in partnership to meet our strategic objectives			
Action	Lead	Frequency	Progress
Evaluate data from monitoring forms used given to business and partners. Feedback this information to the relevant person in charge to enable changes to be implemented.	HR Admin/ Named Lead	Ongoing	

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Item 7 – South Wye Transport Project - authority to agree an appropriate resolution **(To follow)**

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Meeting date:	23 March 2021				
Agenda item:	8a				
Item subject:	Marches LEP Board Member Appointments Panel Report				
For:	Discussion		Decision		Information X

<p>Purpose of the paper: To inform the Board about the recommendations reached by the Board Member Appointments Panel.</p>
<p>Summary of recommendations: That Board Members take note of the recommendations reached by the Board Member Appointments Panel at their February meeting as highlighted in this report.</p>
<p>Main points (recommendations to be highlighted in bold at the end of each section as required):</p> <p>In line with the Board's Terms of Reference (TORs), the Chair set up a Board Member Appointments Panel (the Panel) which met in February 2021 to review and take account of any wishes indicated by Board Members to stand down in the year; manage succession planning and Board Members' rotation; and ensure the Board is as representative as possible of the community it serves.</p> <p>The Panel comprised of Mandy Thorn (Chair), Catherine Baxter, Sara Williams and Cllr David Wright; Gill Hamer and Ilia Bowles also attended the meeting. The items listed below were discussed; consideration was given to the most appropriate course of action to be adopted in each instance, in line with the Marches LEP's Articles of Association and Board' TORs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The appointment of Board Members whose membership has come or is due to come to an end in the year - Discussions regarding succession planning are now taking place with the concerned individuals. • Gender representation - Female Board members currently account for 50% of the Board membership. This has been the case since Beth Heath was appointed as the Chair of Shropshire Business Board and consequently, in accordance with the LEP's Articles of Association, became a member of the Marches LEP Board in February this year. • Diversity - As far as feasible, the Panel would review and assess Board membership composition on behalf of the Board and, when recommending new appointments, would be mindful of maintaining an appropriate range and balance of geographical representation, gender, skills, experience and background across the Board. <p>Post Panel's meeting relevant update</p> <p>Since the Panel met, the Budget announcement in March confirmed a change of direction regarding the future role of the LEPs and new TORs are now being drafted by Government. It has been indicated that at times of uncertainty, whilst LEPs continue to deliver on their commitments and manage their people's expectations, it may be sensitive to ensure stability at Board level by retaining existing knowledge and expertise and extending the terms of Non-Executive-Directors on LEPs' Boards by one year. More clarity on this point would be available once the new TORs for LEPs are published in the Summer.</p> <p>➤ Recommendation – <i>That Board Members take note of the recommendations reached by the Board Member Appointments Panel at their February meeting, as highlighted in this report.</i></p>

Financial implications: None
Legal implications: None
Risks, opportunities and impacts: Maintaining stability in the current uncertain political environment.
Equality implications: See above in relation to diversity.
Additional information/ attachments: None
Background papers/documents: None
Report Author: Ilia Bowles, LEP Director of Corporate Services

Meeting date:	23 March 2021				
Agenda Item:	8b				
Item Subject:	Update on the Service Level Agreement with Shropshire Council				
For:	Discussion		Decision		Information X

<p>Purpose of the Paper: To update Board Members on the Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Shropshire Council.</p>
<p>Summary of Recommendations: That Board Members take note of the steps that have been taken to finalise and sign the SLA with Shropshire Council.</p>
<p>Main points (recommendations to be highlighted in bold at the end of each section as required):</p> <p>Shropshire Council is the Marches LEP’s Accountable Body, a function that can only be carried out by a Local Authority (LA), Combined Authority (CA) or Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) within a LEP area.</p> <p>As its chosen Accountable Body, Shropshire Council receives funds from Government on behalf of the Marches LEP and is responsible for overseeing the proper administration of these funds and for providing assurance to Government that the Marches LEP is operating transparently and with accountability.</p> <p>From 1st April 2021, the Marches LEP and Shropshire Council are entering an SLA for services which defines and formalises how support services for Finance and Accountable Body, IT, HR, Payroll, Legal and Procurement are going to be provided. Currently, Finance and Accountable Body services are provided on the basis of a Memorandum of Understanding, whilst separate SLAs exist for the provision of HR and IT services.</p> <p>Work on the SLA started during financial year 2020 and since last October, once the document had reached a substantial drafting stage, it has gone through an intense period of scrutiny.</p> <p>In November, the SLA was subject to a legal independent review by Bevan Brittan, Marches LEP’s solicitors, which aimed at ensuring the document was commercially sound and well balanced. Most of Bevan Brittan’s comments have been incorporated into the SLA.</p> <p>In December, the SLA was also reviewed by the Incorporation Task and Finish group, which comprised of five Board Members including the LEP Chair, and PRMC, which comprised of four Board Members including the LEP Deputy Chair.</p> <p>At their January meeting, Board members were given the opportunity to comment on the document and their feedback was considered by PRMC at their meeting in February. PRMC members expressed full consensus on the comments raised by the Board. However, it was agreed that, given the time constraints and the criticality of securing the provision of Accountable Body services, the SLA should be agreed and put in place for financial year 2021-22. Any outstanding Board’s comments would then be considered for further investigation before the SLA is renewed in financial year 2022-23.</p> <p>At the beginning of March, the LEP Chair agreed that, to avoid any major governance issues, LEP officers should take responsibility for the SLA and get it finalised at the earliest convenience.</p> <p>The SLA was signed by Gill Hamer, the LEP CEO, and James Walton, S151 Officer at Shropshire Council, in March.</p>

<p>➤ Recommendation – <i>That Board Members take note of the steps that have been taken to finalise and sign the SLA with Shropshire Council.</i></p>
<p>Financial implications: Charges under the new SLA will be made quarterly, in arrears, and will continue to be subject to VAT.</p>
<p>Legal implications: None</p>
<p>Risks, opportunities and impacts: Shropshire Council Finance team has gone through a period of re-structure and, as a result, two new additional members staff (an Interim Director of Strategic Finance and an Assistant Financial Accountant) have been recruited to assist with the LEP workload. The LEP is confident that these changes and the consequent extra resources will allow Shropshire Council to provide a sound and robust support during busy periods.</p>
<p>Equality implications: None</p>
<p>Additional information/ attachments: None</p>
<p>Background papers/documents: None</p>
<p>Report Author: Iliia Bowles, LEP Director of Corporate Services</p>

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Item 9 – Update on 2020/21 spend for Local Growth Deal (LGF) and Getting Building Fund (GBF) **(To follow)**

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Meeting date:	23 March 2021				
Agenda Item:	10				
Item Subject:	Report from the Performance Risk & Monitoring Committee meeting on 25 February 2021				
For:	Discussion		Decision		Information X

Purpose of the Paper: To report on the Performance Risk & Monitoring Committee (PRMC) meeting on 25 February 2021 and highlight the latest changes to the Strategic and Programme risk registers.

Summary of Recommendations: That Board members take note of the outcomes of the last PRMC meeting on 25 February 2021 and the latest changes to the Strategic and Programme risk registers.

Main points (recommendations to be highlighted in bold at the end of each section as required):

Summary of PRMC meeting on 25 February 2021

- Board members' Register of Interests had been updated. Next review is due at the end of February 2022.
- The SLA with Shropshire Council was due to come into effect on 1 April 2021.
- PRMC planned to review its effectiveness at the next meeting on 29 April 2021.
- Still waiting for £500K LEP core funding to be confirmed but £462K Growth Hub funding for financial year 2021/22 had been confirmed.
- There were several risks in delivering Local Growth Fund (LGF) and Getting Building Fund (GBF) spend profiles due to the challenging circumstances caused by Covid-19 restrictions and the practicalities of spending £23M and £7M of projects respectively from Quarter 2 onwards.
- Outcomes of the LEP Annual Performance Review (APR), which took place on 9 February 2021, were 'good' for strategy, 'good' for governance and 'action needed' for delivery. Final ratings for delivery could change if LGF and GBF spend all funds by 31 March 2021.
- In February, the LEP Board agreed to a) the variation of the funding agreement that existed with MCMT and b) the extension of the tourism grants.
- Legal discussions over the South Wye project continued.
- Telford Business Board (BB) had updated its Terms of Reference (TORs). Shropshire BB had yet to ratify its new ones. Herefordshire BB was currently re-developing its TORs.
- Sara Williams had been elected Deputy Chair of PRMC.

Risks table score key based on likelihood and impact

Low		Medium		High	
1	2	3	4	5	6

New Risks added to the Strategic risk register (S) and the Programme risk register (P):

2 Risk No	3 S6.1	4 Date Added	5 25 Feb 2021
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6 Risk Description	Failure to progress the Marches Local Industrial Strategy due to changing government priorities and insufficient resources.		
7 Risk Rating	8 6	9 Target Score	10 4
11 Risk Mitigation	Communication with Area Lead to understand Government's current position. Awaiting announcement in 2021 regarding the role and purpose of Local Industrial Strategy as part of economic recovery planning.		
12 Risk No	13 S6.2	14 Date Added	15 25 Feb 2021
16 Risk Description	The LEP's Economic Recovery Plan does not meet government's and partners' needs.		
17 Risk Rating	18 4	19 Target Score	20 1
21 Risk Mitigation	LEP representatives contributing to local authority's working groups and draft Economic Recovery Plan builds on shared priorities outlined in the Strategic Economic Plan.		
22 Risk No	23 S6.3	24 Date Added	25 25 Feb 2021
26 Risk Description	The LEP has limited capacity and capability to access and analyse accurate local economic data and intelligence.		
27 Risk Rating	28 4	29 Target Score	30 1
31 Risk Mitigation	Resource to buy in capability built into Core and Skills operational budgets. Working groups with three local authorities and Midlands Engine to share data and intelligence.		
32 Risk No	33 S6.4	34 Date Added	35 25 Feb 2021
36 Risk Description	Changes to government policy regarding LEPs.		
37 Risk Rating	38 6	39 Target Score	40 4
41 Risk Mitigation	Communication with Area Lead to understand Government's current position. Work with LEP Network to highlight the role and benefit of LEPs and how LEPs can evolve and adapt to address the changing demands of local economic growth. Local stakeholder management including liaison with MPs.		
42 Risk No	43 S6.5	44 Date Added	45 25 Feb 2021
46 Risk Description	The LEP fails to drive 'inclusive growth' through its portfolio of projects, investment programmes and strategies.		
47 Risk Rating	48 4	49 Target Score	50 1
51 Risk Mitigation	Equality impact assessment forms part of scrutiny by local authorities.		

52 Risk No	53 P2.13	54 Date Added	55 25 Feb 2021
56 Risk Description	LEP does not receive its full 21/22 allocation of Getting Building Fund for projects from the Government due to concerns around spend.		
57 Risk Rating	58 4	59 Target Score	60 TBC
61 Risk Mitigation	Project Engagement Visits have been held and the team is working closely with projects to ensure spend is in line with the GBF 20/21 programme profile. A Freedoms and Flexibilities letter has been developed by Bevan Brittan solicitors to enable projects to utilise Freedoms and Flexibilities to meet 20/21 spend profiles.		

62 Risk No	63 P3.16	64 Date Added	65 25 Feb 2021
66 Risk Description	Limited time for the LEP to consider Grant Funding Agreement variation requests from Growth Deal 3 projects in line with the timescale for spend.		
67 Risk Rating	68 4	69 Target Score	70 TBC
71 Risk Mitigation	The LEP has worked closely with Bevan Brittan solicitors to develop a Variation template to respond to LGF projects requesting variations.		

72 Risk No	73 P3.17	74 Date Added	75 25 Feb 2021
76 Risk Description	Limited time for the LEP to consider Grant Funding Agreement variation requests from Getting Building Fund projects in line with the timescale for spend.		
77 Risk Rating	78 4	79 Target Score	80 TBC
81 Risk Mitigation	The LEP has worked closely with Bevan Brittan solicitors to develop a Variation template in response to a number of GBF projects requesting variations. At the Emergency LEP Board on 24th February the Board approved the utilisation of the Marches Investment Fund as a cashflow facility for the Getting Building Fund, ensuring the LEP was able to meet its contractual commitments during the 2020/21 Financial Year.		

Reviewed Risks:

82 Risk No	83 S1.1	84 Date Reviewed	85 25 Feb 2021
86 Risk Description	Provision of services between the Marches LEP and Shropshire Council is not formalised.		
87 Res. Risk Rating	88 6	89 Target Score	90 4
91 Risk/Mitigation	92 A SLA between the LEP and Shropshire Council as the Accountable Body is due to come into effect on 1st April 2021. Between March and September 2020, prior to the appointment of the LEP Director of Corporate Services, an interim officer was appointed to support the LEP in developing the SLA and establish the services required by LEP. Following an independent legal review of the document, a		

meeting with Shropshire Council took place in November to discuss the outcome of that review and incorporate the comments to the SLA. The Incorporation Task & Finish group and PRMC scrutinised the latest draft of the SLA in December, whilst the LEP Board did so at their January meeting. Most of the comments raised have been discussed and agreed with Shropshire Council.

Risks to be reviewed by Board Members at their next meeting in May:

Risks relating to Equality and Diversity, which will be first added to the Strategic risk register in due course and will be considered by PRMC at their next meeting on 29 April 2021.

LEP Board Actions required in the short term from a PRMC’s perspective:

- Encourage a review of Herefordshire Business Board (BB) TORs so that they are aligned with Nolan Principles, in relation to risk 1.2 in the Strategic risk register.
- Whilst the Government continues its review on the future role of the LEPs and new TORs are being drafted, ensure the LEP continue to deliver on its commitments and manage its people’s expectations, in relation to risk 6.4 in the Strategic risk register.
- **Recommendation** – *That Board members take note of the outcomes of the last PRMC meeting on 25 February 2021 and the latest changes to the Strategic and Programme risk registers.*

Financial implications: The LEP needs to monitor risks to the projects accurately and ensure these do not impact negatively on its performance.

Legal implications: None

Risks, opportunities and impacts: None

Equality implications: None

Additional information/ attachments:

1. [LEP Strategic Risk Register](#)
2. [LEP Programme Risk Register](#)

Background papers/documents: None

Report Author: Ilia Bowles, LEP Director of Corporate Services

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Item 11

Marches LEP Chair and Chief Executive's Report

Marches LEP Ltd Board Meeting on 23 March 2021

This report provides updates on issues that do not require a Board decision. The LEP Chair and CEO will take questions on any of the below items at the Board meeting.

1. Business Support

a) Marches Business Investment Grant (MBIG) project

This much valued grant scheme, administered by Herefordshire Council on behalf of Marches partners, obtained approval from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in September 2019 to provide direct grant support to businesses to increase productivity and create new jobs. The initial budget for business grants was £3m from European Regional Development Funds (ERDF). This was later increased to £3.428m in November 2020, following a successful request for additional funds. The LEP contributed £15,000 to the administration costs of the project which will complete in June 2023. The project consists of 2 schemes available for SMEs:

- Building Investment Grant – maximum 50% grant capped at £150k for new builds, conversions and reconfiguration projects
- Small Equipment Grant – maximum 50% grant capped at £10,000 for purchasing new equipment

The Building Investment Grant scheme was launched in November 2019 and the Small Equipment Grant in May 2020. To date, the project has received over 500 enquiries and approved grants to 58 businesses (target 132) across the Marches, totalling £1.6m. These businesses aim to create 122.5 jobs (target 145).

To note the Chair of the MBIG grants panel is Paul Hinkins (Chair of Telford Business Board) and both Shropshire and Herefordshire Business Boards have a representative on the panel.

b) 2021/22 Marches Growth Hub (MGH) Funding

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) has secured £22m for the growth hub network in England for the 2021/22 FY and the Marches allocation will be £462k, i.e. the same increased budget that was received in 2020/21. BEIS hopes to issue grant offer letters to LEPs by the end of March 2021. This delay in the paperwork and in understanding specific funding priorities is having an impact on activity planning but partners have been asked to ensure that there are no gaps in support being offered locally.

c) West Midlands Growth Hub Cluster (6 LEPs working together)

Participation in West Midlands Growth Hub Cluster continues with weekly calls to share best practice and align activities.

d) MGH Delivery Risks Highlighted by the Business Support Lead

- Steve Kenny, temporary resource supporting MGH, left the LEP on 15 January 2021 having secured an alternative role. A replacement continues to be sought to increase capacity within the team.
- There is a risk of underspend against Supplementary and EU Transition Growth Hub Funding and this is being monitored.

e) Small Business Recovery Grant Scheme (ERDF Covid 19 Kickstart Funds)

Telford & Wrekin Council, who are leading this work for Marches partners, are continuing to deliver this project well. Given a recent extension, both Telford & Wrekin Council and Herefordshire Council

are now looking at ways to commit remaining funds via targeted promotion in the Visitor Economy strand by 31 March 2021. Project completion would be required by 31st May 2021. Overall, the scheme is 85% committed (98% Wider Economy/62% Visitor Economy). As of 10 March 2021, circa £430k has or is in the process of being paid out to 182 businesses representing 80% of that committed by value. An exercise to identify projects that have yet to submit a claim or have already taken advantage of the extension in completing their project, will be undertaken whereby they will be encouraged to benefit from the funding i.e., complete their projects and submit a claim.

f) Peer Networks

The programme commenced on 17 December 20, with the three contracted providers delivering 5 cohorts comprising a total of 45 registered participants. All cohorts have now received over 75% of their scheduled delivery, through a combination of group and 1:1 support, with final sessions taking place over the remainder of this month. An external evaluation exercise of the current programme is now underway; formal internal feedback from Marches participants indicates that 74% are 'Highly Satisfied' with the programme to date and evidence is emerging of the benefits they have derived from their participation, in terms of both individual and business development.

The current programme concludes on 31 March 2021, however BEIS has gained approval to roll out a second programme during 2021/22 and a further Grant Agreement is to be put in place. The Marches LEP has been allocated funding to operate 3 further cohorts from 1 April 2021.

g) Department for International Trade (DIT)

Formal confirmation from DIT is awaited but it is understood that the funding supporting the Food & Drink cluster post (employed by Shropshire Chamber) to 31 March 2021 is unlikely to be extended beyond this date. The implications of this are being considered.

DIT has advised that, subject to a successful business case being submitted, funding to support the Key Account Management project will be allocated to the Marches LEP in 2021/22. This provides a contribution towards the costs of the local authorities' Inward Investment teams to support locally based, foreign-owned businesses.

2. Skills and Labour Market Support

The Marches LEP secured £75k from Department for Education in 2020/21 to finalise its evidence base and data set for use by Skills Advisory Panel (SAP) partners. Funding has been used to update analysis of skills needs and demand, potential growth areas, labour market challenges and sector specific opportunities and to evidence the impact of the SAP. In addition to the work being undertaken by Hatch Associates to produce a Local Skills Report, the Marches LEP has invested in EMSI Analyst as a data analysis toolkit for the LEP team and the three Local Authorities. The three FE Colleges also have access to the curriculum planning toolkit and the Marches Skills Provider Network has access to Job Postings data and analysis.

3. Economic Recovery Planning

A Marches LEP Economic Recovery Plan has been drafted to summarise activities already undertaken in response to the economic impact of Covid 19 and to confirm future workstreams to be led by the LEP team. This document is designed to align with the individual economic recovery plans that each of the three local authorities has developed. Feedback on the draft plan is expected from the local authorities by the end of March 2021 and an updated version will be circulated to the three Business Boards for comment/review. The final draft will then be brought to the Marches LEP Board meeting on 25 May 2021.

4. Marches LEP Peer Review with Dorset LEP

On 8 March 2021 the Marches LEP Chair, CEO, and other LEP team managers undertook a Peer Review exercise with their counterparts from Dorset LEP. The LEP Network had commissioned the Centre for Public Scrutiny to facilitate the 2–3 hour review, which all LEPs are required to undertake.



As well as each LEP providing an overview on their respective economic challenges and how each is progressing in addressing these the following topics were discussed in some detail: Board member recruitment; how we manage stakeholder engagement including businesses; management of PR and marketing; how we support both tourism and rural enterprise; and how we have supported SMEs during the COVID pandemic using Growth Hub services.

Gill Hamer, LEP CEO

Mandy Thorn MBE DL, LEP Chair

End