

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

Present:

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| Mandy Thorn MBE DL | MT | Chair, Marches LEP Board |
| Sonia Roberts | SR | Deputy Chair Marches LEP Board; Equality & Diversity Champion; CEO Landau Limited |
| Frank Myers MBE | FM | Herefordshire Business Board Chair |
| Beth Heath | BH | Shropshire 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 (part of meeting) |
| 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 |
| Dr Catherine Baxter | CB | Higher Education Champion; University Secretary, Harper Adams University |
| Christine Snell | CS | Business Partner, AJ & CI Snell |
| Ruth Shepherd | RS | Director, Results Communications (part of meeting) |

In Attendance:

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| James Walton | JW | Section 151 Officer, Shropshire Council |
| Roger Allonby | RA | Head of Economic Development, Herefordshire Council (part of meeting) |
| Mark Barrow | MB | Executive Director for Place, Shropshire Council (part of meeting) |
| Katherine Kynaston | KK | Director Housing Economy & Infrastructure, Telford & Wrekin Council (part of meeting) |
| Ollie Hindle | OH | Assistant Director, West Midlands & South West, Cities & Local Growth Unit, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (part of meeting) |
| Nick Francis | NF | Deputy Head, West Midlands & South West, Cities & Local Growth Unit, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (part of meeting) |
| Cynyr Rhys | CR | Senior Associate, Bevan Brittan LLP (part of meeting) |
| Gill Hamer | GH | Chief Executive, Marches LEP |
| Ilia Bowles | IB | Director of Corporate Services, Marches LEP |
| Kathryn Jones | KJ | Partnership Manager, Marches LEP (part of meeting) |
| Nick Alamanos | NA | Programme Manager, Marches LEP (part of meeting) |
| Ennis Vingoe | EV | Marches LEP Executive Assistant (part of meeting) |
| Wayne Redge | WR | Marches LEP Office Administrator (part of meeting) |

| ITEM | | ACTION |
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| 1. | 1. Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest MT welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting. MT said that 2 members had submitted declarations of interest for Item 7, and due to the sensitive nature of this item it would be discussed in a separate session that would | |

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| | <p>commence at 6pm. Apologies were received from Sara Williams. MT noted that the meeting was being recorded to aid the production of the minutes.</p> <p>2. Declarations of Interest</p> <p>The Chair reminded members to complete the form that had been distributed for any specific Declarations of Interest for this meeting. Declarations had been received from:</p> <p>DH – declared an interest in Item 7 as the Leader of Herefordshire Council. PN - declared an interest in Item 7 as the Leader of Shropshire Council.</p> | |
| 2. | <p>Minutes of the Marches LEP Ltd Board meeting held on 26 January 2021</p> <p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2021 were approved by those members present at the meeting and would be signed (electronically) by the Chair as a true and accurate record of the meeting.</p> <p>Minutes of the Marches LEP Ltd Emergency Board meeting held on 24 February 2021</p> <p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2021 were approved by those present at the meeting and would be signed (electronically) by the Chair as a true and accurate record of the meeting.</p> | EV |
| 3. | <p>Update on the Kickstart programme – Richard Smith, Department for Work and pensions (DWP) Group Partnership Manager for the West Midlands</p> <p>RS provided an update and said that since the start of 2021, a significant focus had been on providing the Kickstart Scheme - a £3bn national programme providing 6 months' work experience for young people (aged 16-24 years) in receipt of universal credit. Employers applied to be Kickstart employers or to be part of a Gateway organisation. The Marches had a number of Gateway organisations and the majority of the placement opportunities would come from these. So far in the Marches area just under 700 young people had been moved into work. The final placements were due to commence on 31 December 2021, but DWP was hopeful that there would be an extension and was looking to see where there were gaps in terms of sectors and geography. Members had a number of queries. It was agreed that C Snell would speak to RS about how DWP could work with the agricultural sector on placements.</p> <p>MT thanked RS for the update. She also thanked members whose businesses were Gateway organisations, supporting young people in the Marches area to find work placements.</p> | CS |
| 4. | <p>Outcomes of 3 March 2021 Budget and implications for LEPs</p> <p>GH told members that it was likely that there would be a change in emphasis in the role of LEPs with the focus being more on business engagement, business support, skills and innovation. The capital infrastructure funding (Levelling Up fund) would be bid for individually by local authorities. This was a policy decision within MHCLG and was not a reflection on the performance of LEPs. A review of the future role of LEPs would be undertaken before the end of July 2021 and Terms of Reference for this review, which should be available within the next week, would be circulated to members.</p> <p>PN said that he could see advantages to the Levelling Up funding coming directly through local authorities via a competitive process but was confident of a future role for LEPs particularly in business engagement. He said that local authorities should continue to extend their role around local business engagement.</p> <p>DW said that a number of overlapping agendas had led to the Government decision but that the advantage of the LEP was that it provided a forum for local authorities</p> | GH |

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| | <p>and others key stakeholders to get around the table to discuss local priorities. The LEP had a continuing role to play in bringing together a range of local partners. DH said that the LEP had particular expertise that was not currently available in his local authority. There were some issues such as the environment, agriculture, culture and tourism where the local authority would wish to work with the LEP. It may be more of a challenge to fund these elements in the future. DH felt that Government was unrealistic in the current funding and delivery deadlines. PH welcomed the changing role of the LEP and commented on the increased role for business engagement and the competitive nature of the future funding. MT said that as directors, the Board need to be mindful of the impact of any proposed changes on the LEP staff team.</p> <p>The Board noted the content of the report.</p> | |
| <p>5.</p> | <p>Local Skills Report</p> <p>JS introduced Ellie Wright and Simon Hooton from Hatch and thanked members of the Skills Advisory Panel, the LEP team particularly Aggie Caesar-Homden, and business and education partners for their contribution to the research over the past 2 years. There had been a significant amount of work and consultation undertaken resulting in the Local Skills Report - Strategy and Action Plan. The presentation covered the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic priorities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cross cutting priorities ○ Sector priorities ○ COVID-19 recovery priorities • Extensive list of actions to address the issues identified <p>Members asked a number of questions on the report. CB said that the Marches LEP HE Group (which included the FE sector), were grateful to have had the opportunity to be involved in the research for the Report. MT said that the production of the Report was the start of a process and that the Board would need to own the actions required. MT thanked JS, E Wright and S Hooton for their work on the Report.</p> <p>The Board noted the purpose of the Marches Local Skills Report.</p> <p>The Board endorsed 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 (unanimous).</p> | |
| <p>6.</p> | <p>Inclusive Economy and Diversity Policy and Implementation Plan</p> <p>SR said that it was important to have a policy in place for good governance and the action plan would ensure that the policy was implemented. Reviews against the plan would be undertaken on a regularly and a progress report would be brought to the Board for the November meeting. MT said that it was an excellent document.</p> <p>The Board approved the Marches LEP’s Inclusive Economy and Diversity Policy and relating Implementation Plan (unanimous).</p> | |
| <p>7.</p> | <p>Governance</p> <p>a. Board Member Appointments Panel Report</p> <p>IB said that the Panel had met to review Board appointments due to come to an end in 2021 and discussions were in progress with relevant members regarding</p> | |

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| | <p>succession planning. The Panel also reviewed gender representation and the Board would be looking to at least maintain the current gender representation of its membership which was just under 50% female. The Panel had looked at the composition of the Board to ensure it was representative of the Marches geography and also the diversity in skills, experience and background of the population in the Marches</p> <p>The Board noted the recommendations reached by the Board Member Appointments Panel at their February meeting as highlighted in the report.</p> <p>b. Service Level Agreement (SLA) between Marches LEP and Shropshire Council IB confirmed that the SLA had been signed and the provision of services by Shropshire Council had been formalised. This agreement would come into effect on 1 April 2021. There would be several reviews throughout the year to ensure the requirements were met.</p> <p>The Board noted the steps that had been taken to finalise and sign the SLA with Shropshire Council.</p> | |
| 8. | <p>Update on 2020/21 spend for Local Growth Fund (LGF) and Getting Building Fund (GBF) NA updated the Board on the Local Growth Fund and Getting Building Fund projects.</p> <p>GBF LEP Board members were informed that, based on the information provided by projects a potential over commitment of circa. £1.7million was anticipated for 2020/21. It was reported that this situation continued to be fluid as all the activity in this financial year had yet to be concluded. As agreed at the Emergency Board Meeting on 24 February 2021, the Marches Investment Fund would be utilised as a cashflow facility.</p> <p>The Board noted the current position relating to the Getting Building Fund Programme, as set out in section 1 of the Report.</p> <p>LGF It was reported that due to the Tannery project not proceeding with the St Austin Street Carpark, an underspend position of £194,568 was established within the LGF Programme. As agreed at the 24 March 2020 LEP Board Meeting, any available LGF funds would be awarded to projects within the approved LGF Project Reserve List. The Bishop's Castle project, ranked 1st on the reserve list, was awarded funds on 18 March 2021 through Delegated Authority approval.</p> <p>The Board noted the Delegated Authority decision taken in awarding the Bishops Castle project £194,568 of Local Growth Funds, as set out in section 2.4 of the Report.</p> <p>Based on the outturn information position provided by projects the LGF Programme remained on course to spend its full allocation, it was reported there was significant work being undertaken with project promoters and a considerable amount of money still to be invoiced. GH thanked project promoters, Shropshire Council finance team and NA and the LEP team for their contribution to the work required to process all the invoices for the projects.</p> <p>The Board noted the current position relating to the Local Growth Fund Programme, as set out in section 2.5 of the Report.</p> | |

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| | <p>Following the Emergency Board Meeting in February 2021 a draft Deed of Variation had been sent to the Marches Centre for Manufacturing and Technology. The Board noted the latest position in relation to the MCMT Deed of Variation, as set out in section 2.6 of the Report.</p> <p>GH commented that based on the potential status of LGF and GBF at the end of the financial year the LEP was keen that MHCLG review the indicative outcomes of the Annual Performance Review 2021 and amend the rating for 'Delivery' from 'action needed' to 'meeting expectations'.</p> | |
| 9. | <p>Report from the Performance Risk and Monitoring Committee (PRMC) meeting on 25 February 2021</p> <p>SR thanked Sara Williams for volunteering to be the PRMC Deputy Chair. Board members would be invited to comment on the PRMC via a 360-degree review, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the committee. Board members were asked to forward any suggestions they may have on future agenda items for the PRMC to SR. MT thanked SR and IB for the report.</p> <p>The Board noted the outcomes of the last PRMC meeting on 25 February 2021 and the latest changes to the Strategic and Programme risk registers.</p> | All |
| 10. | <p>LEP Chair/CEO report</p> <p>MT and GH described the Peer Review process which the Marches LEP had recently undertaken with Dorset LEP.</p> <p>GH said that the Marches LEP PR and marketing tender would be issued in the next couple of days.</p> <p>BH asked for it to be noted that she wished to review with others how business intelligence is gathered from the business boards effectively to support the work of the LEP and the need for business boards to ensure their membership represent the business sectors in their areas. It was suggested that the 3 business board chairs discuss the issue separately.</p> | |
| 11. | <p>Any Other Business</p> <p>Nil</p> | |
| 12. | <p><i>The meeting was suspended at 5.45pm and except for GH, JW, IB and CR all non-Board Members left the meeting at this point. PN and DH who had declared an interest in this item, also left the meeting.</i></p> <p><i>The meeting re-convened at 6.00pm in closed session.</i></p> <p>South Wye Transport project legal dispute – authority to negotiate</p> <p>A separate confidential note of this meeting will be produced.</p> | |
| | Next Meeting of the Board of The Marches LEP Limited: Tuesday 25 May 2021 | |