

MARCHES LEP LTD BOARD MEETING PAPER

Meeting date:	28 September 2021				
Agenda Item:	4				
Item Subject:	Update from the Marches Skills Advisory Panel				
For:	Discussion		Decision		Information X

Purpose of the Paper:

To provide the Marches LEP Board with an update on the Skills agenda and work undertaken by the LEP to implement the recommendations of the Marches Local Skills Report published in March 2021.

Summary of Recommendations:

That the Board notes the work of the Skills Advisory Panel and its achievements under James Staniforth and welcomes Graham Guest to the role of SAP Chair with effect from 01 October 2021.

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

In December 2018, the Department for Education (DfE) announced the introduction of Skills Advisory Panels (SAP) with the aim of bringing together local employers and skills providers to pool knowledge on skills and labour market needs and to collaborate to understand and address key local challenges. This includes both immediate needs and challenges and looking at what is required to help local areas adapt to future labour market changes and to grasp future opportunities. These panels evolved from existing LEP and MCA employment and skills boards.

Since its evolution from the existing Marches Skills Board, the work of the Marches LEP SAP has been developed, refined and refocused through its transition by its current Chair, James Staniforth, Principal & CEO of Shrewsbury Colleges Group. James has held the SAP Chair role since its inception in September 2019, having joined the Marches LEP Board in May 2018. The SAP has commissioned research and several data and intelligence initiatives to inform strategy and directly contributed to, and provided resources in support of, the skills agenda across the Marches, in line with DfE's overarching policies. For example, Marches LEP resources supported the successful development of the Marches Construction Ready Centre and SAP funding has provided a wealth of data and intelligence to support curriculum development and funding bids.

The Skills Board and SAP have also been instrumental in the compilation of the LEP's Strategic Economic Plan, its Local Industrial Strategy and, most recently, the [Marches Local Skills Report](#) and [Marches Local Skills Report Annexes](#) which, following two years' work, set an ambitious vision of the creation of a skills landscape across the Marches LEP to meet the needs of its businesses and ensure a bright future for its talented young people and adults.

The LEP team has also supported the recent successful bid, led by Telford College in conjunction with Herefordshire, Ludlow and North Shropshire College, Shrewsbury Colleges Group and SBC Training, to take forward a government Skills Accelerator Strategic Development Fund pilot. This will explore how providers can work together more effectively, alongside employers and other partners, to respond to local skills and innovation priorities with a particular focus on health and social care provision across the Marches.

Following an extension to his initial one-year appointment, James will now chair his final SAP meeting at the end of September 2021 and will be succeeded by Graham Guest, Principal & CEO of Telford College. Graham takes up the post at a time of uncertainty around LEP funding but the immediate SAP priorities for the remainder of the financial year include:

- Finalising deep dive studies into:
 - the Visitor Economy (inc. Hospitality and Catering),
 - Transport and Logistics (picking up on issues of post -covid demand specifically around warehousing and HGV) and
 - Retail (with a post covid lens – linking to work already compiled re footfall and the changing nature of retail including increased need for digital skills)
- Monitoring the progress of implementation of the Local Skills Report Action Plan (subject to external funding opportunities)
- Reviewing the use of data sources and tools funded by the SAP to consider future investment to underpin skills provision linked to local economic priorities.

Recommendation – that the Board notes the work of the Skills Advisory Panel and its achievements under James Staniforth and welcomes Graham Guest to the role of SAP Chair with effect from 01 October 2021.

Financial implications:

The LEP receives an annual grant of, currently, £75k from DfE to support the SAP in providing analysis of local labour markets and to enable the planning and development of skills initiatives that meet local needs.

Legal implications:

The Skills and Post-16 Education Bill, which is currently progressing through Parliament, outlines government thinking around the skills agenda.

The scope of work undertaken by the SAP is determined by a Memorandum of Understanding agreed with DfE.

Risks, opportunities and impacts:

Future SAP funding will be subject to the implementation of recommendations from the current LEP Review and confirmation of DfE priorities. However, skills development and employment support will continue to remain a high priority for the Marches region.

The current uncertainty over LEP funding has put recruitment to the vacant Skills Manager post on hold. The co-ordination of essential skills activity is currently being undertaken by other members of the LEP executive in addition to their core roles.

Equality implications:

The SAP supports the LEP's work in driving economic recovery, improving education, skills and employment opportunities across the Marches, giving young people the best start in life and levelling up opportunity for all.

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Background papers/documents:

- [Marches Local Skills Report](#)
- [Marches Local Skills Report Annexes](#)