

**Minutes of the Marches LEP Ltd Board Meeting 25
May 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; Equality & Diversity Champion; CEO Landau Limited
Frank Myers MBE	FM	Herefordshire Business Board Chair
Beth Heath	BH	Shropshire Business Board Chair (part of meeting)
Paul Hinkins	PH	Telford Business Board Chair
Andrew Manning Cox	AMC	Hereford Enterprise Zone Chair
Cllr Ellie Chowns	EC	Cabinet Member - Environment, Economy and Skills, Herefordshire Council
Cllr Steve Charmley	SC	Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Physical Infrastructure, Highways and Built Housing, 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 (part of meeting)
Dr Catherine Baxter	CB	Higher Education Champion; University Secretary, Harper Adams University
Christine Snell	CS	Business Partner, AJ & CI Snell (part of meeting)
Ruth Shepherd	RS	Director, Results Communications
Sara Williams	SW	Marketing Manager - Northern Europe, Protolabs

In Attendance:

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)
Sally Edgington	SE	Head, South West Team, Cities & Local Growth Unit, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (part of meeting)
Annabelle Townley	AT	Deputy Area Lead, West Midlands & South West, Cities & Local Growth Unit, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (part of meeting)
Sarah Spink	SS	Strategic Partnerships Lead, Midlands Connect (presenting)
Mark Pearce	MP	Managing Director, Skylon Park (presenting)
Gill Hamer DL	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
Tim Yair	TY	Regional Senior Energy Projects Officer, Midlands Energy Hub (part of meeting)

Ennis Vingoe	EV	Marches LEP Executive Assistant (part of meeting)
Wayne Redge	WR	Marches LEP Office Administrator (part of meeting)
Observers:		
Amy Bould		Be Bold Ltd
Andy Robinson		Contracted Solicitor, Herefordshire Council
ITEM		
1.	<p>1. Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest MT thanked everyone for attending the meeting, in particular Cllr Charmley and Cllr Chowns as Alternate Directors. Apologies were received from Cllr Hitchiner. MT said that following the recent local elections Cllr Nutting was no longer a member of the Marches LEP Board. MT said that she had written, on behalf of members of the Marches LEP Board, to thank Cllr Nutting for his service to the LEP Board during his period of tenure. DW also thanked Cllr Nutting on behalf of Telford & Wrekin Council. MT said that this was PH's final meeting and thanked him for his hard work over the past 7 years, including as former Deputy Chair of the Board and as a member and Chair of a number of sub-committees. DW also thanked PH for his contribution on behalf of Telford & Wrekin Council. The relevant documentation would be forwarded to Companies House. MT noted that the meeting was being recorded to aid the production of the minutes.</p> <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.</p>	
2.	<p>Midlands Connect Briefing MT welcomed S Spink who provided an update to the Board on the work of Midlands Connect. The main points covered were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Union Connectivity Review – the Welsh-English border provided a barrier to connectivity and rurality was also an issue. • Birmingham/Black Country/Shrewsbury line – the frequency of services to London required improvement. Electrification was a long-term aspiration but, in the meantime, a business case had been produced for a Shrewsbury Corridor Scheme. • Midlands Connect Strategy Refresh – for publication in the Autumn. • LEP involvement – collaboration between LEP areas was a positive factor including the provision of relevant data and information. <p>MT thanked S Spink for the informative presentation.</p>	
3.	<p>Hereford Enterprise Zone Update AMC and MP provided an update on the Hereford Enterprise Zone (HEZ) activity. The main points covered were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development commenced on the site in 2012 and a significant amount of infrastructure work including flood defences had been carried out to prepare the land for plot sales. • The majority of sales were freehold, but some units were also available for rent. • Business investment – many priority sector businesses including local, national and international companies were locating at the site reflecting Herefordshire Council and LEP economic strategies. • A mixture of office spaces and industrial units were available. • Infrastructure had been developed to support the wellbeing of workers with leisure space and a 'Greenway' linking the zone to the town. 	
		EV

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cyber Quarter - cyber security and defence and security businesses were being attracted to locate to the site reflecting the concentration of cyber businesses in the region. • NMITE campus - funding from the LEP Local Growth Fund had supported the development of the campus and LEP funding had been crucial to the overall development of the site. <p>MT thanked AMC and MP for the presentation and all their work in support of the HEZ.</p>	
4.	<p>Minutes of the Marches LEP Ltd Board meeting held on 23 March 2021 The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 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. The minutes of the confidential session at the end of the previous meeting had been circulated and no comments received and were therefore adopted.</p> <p>Matters Arising Item 3 – the NFU was now involved in the Kickstart scheme. CS was working with DWP on this but there were few applicants coming forward at this stage.</p>	EV
5.	<p>Review of LEPs GH presented a progress report on the work on the LEP Review and said that the proposed future operating model of the LEP could look very different. A paper on LEP geography was expected on 26 May 2021. PK said that he felt that many members would have concerns about the proposed operating model. They had joined the Marches LEP Board so that the business sector could make a valuable contribution to influencing the wider economic growth agenda, and the proposed new model would not necessary facilitate this. GH expressed concern that there could be delays in publishing the outcome of the review which would put increased pressure on LEP staff, due to the ongoing uncertainty around employment. MT said that there was also uncertainty about the £500k LEP funding from government for this financial year, because it had yet to be received.</p>	
6.	<p>Draft LEP Recovery Strategy KJ introduced the Recovery Strategy. This had built upon the information in the Strategic Economic Plan and was an aligned approach across the 3 local authority areas, within anticipated existing resources in this financial year. EC thanked KJ for the work on the document and suggested some amendments to the structure, content and actions. Feedback from the business boards would continue to be sought. The Board agreed the draft recovery strategy as a working document (unanimous). The Board noted that this document would evolve/be added to as further data emerges</p>	KJ
7.	<p>Appointment of a LEP Board Champion for Energy and NET Zero IB said that the identification of an energy champion had been discussed at the Board meeting in January 2021. The Marches Energy Strategy Steering Group had nominated Gordon Coppock for the role. FM suggested also nominating a named substitute who could be invited to Board meetings as an observer. TY would take the suggestion to the Energy Strategy Steering Group to discuss further and to potentially nominate an additional substitute co-opted member. The Board endorsed the Marches Energy Strategy Steering Group’s recommendation to appoint Gordon Coppock as a Co-opted Member and Energy Champion on the LEP Board (unanimous).</p>	TY

	<p>The Board approved The Marches Energy Strategy Steering Group’s recommendation to empower the Energy Champion with the responsibilities listed in section 1.3 of the paper (unanimous).</p> <p>CB asked whether co-opted members became directors of Marches LEP Ltd. SR confirmed that they do not become directors of the company.</p> <p>The Board approved Option 1 as explained in section 3 of the paper, with regards to Co-opted Members’ voting rights (10 for option 1; 4 for option 2; 1 abstention)</p>	
<p>8.</p>	<p>8 a) Governance updates</p> <p>Scheme of Delegation</p> <p>IB reported that following a review it had become clear that the current delegated financial authority of the LEP Chief Executive of £30k was inadequate, mainly due to an increase in the overall monthly costs of the LEP Secretariat (i.e. salaries). It was proposed that the Scheme of Delegation was amended as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The LEP Chief Executive to be able to authorise expenditure up to the value of £45k (plus VAT). • The LEP Chair’s and S151 Officer’s consent to be sought for approval of expenditure between £45k (plus VAT) and £65k (plus VAT). • The LEP Board’s consent to be sought for approval of expenditure above £65k (plus VAT). <p>The proposed amendments were supported by the S151 Officer at Shropshire Council, the Marches LEP Accountable Body.</p> <p>The Board approved the revised Marches LEP Scheme of Delegation (14 for; 1 abstention).</p> <p>Accountability and Assurance Framework</p> <p>IB said that following on from the initial review of the Marches LEP Accountability and Assurance Framework in January, the remaining sections of the document had now been reviewed to ensure that they were up-to-date and consistent with the National Local Growth Assurance Framework for LEPs.</p> <p>The Board approved the revised Marches LEP Accountability and Assurance Framework (co-opted members section, revised appendices 3, 5, 7, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 and 24, and new appendix 23) (14 for; 1 abstention).</p> <p>Accounts and Audit for financial year 2020/21</p> <p>IB informed the Board that the same companies used last year had been appointed to prepare the Marches LEP statutory accounts and complete the corporation tax return for financial year 2020/21 (Thorne Widgery), and to conduct the external audit (James Holyoak & Parker). Final draft accounts and initial results of the external audit would be presented to the LEP Board at the next meeting in July.</p> <p>The Board noted the intended timetable for the preparation of the Accounts and relating external Audit for financial year ending 31 March 2021</p>	

	<p>8 b) Procurement of a new PR & Marketing Contract</p> <p>IB described the process being followed for the procurement of a new PR and Marketing contract. There was some discussion about the PR and Marketing function including how value for money was assessed and how a contractor was measured for success. GH said that ‘coverage’ reports from the existing provider were distributed to the Board and a significant amount of data was available, particularly for the Marches Growth Hub. AMC said that he felt the current provision for HEZ represented good value for money. Members also asked about the daily rate being used as a guide for the tender. There was some discussion about the level of the rate and the specialist nature of the PR support the LEP required. MT confirmed that a ‘termination clause’ was included in the contract. GH said that an up to date ‘coverage’ report would be provided to the next Board meeting.</p> <p>The Board noted the process being followed for the procurement of a new PR and Marketing contract and authorised the relating expenditure of £86k + VAT per annum, subject to funding being provided to the LEP by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.</p>	GH
9.	<p>Local Growth Fund (LGF) & Getting Building Fund (GBF) - progress report for 2020/21 FY</p> <p>NA updated the Board on the 2020/21 outturn positions for LGF and GBF and thanked all partners for their contribution to the achievement of the LGF and GBF spend over the last financial year. MT said that a huge amount of work had been done to ensure the required spend had taken place by the deadlines. MT and FM thanked the LEP Programme Team in particular, for their enormous contribution to ensuring this success.</p> <p>It was noted that 2 reports relating to NMITE remained outstanding from Herefordshire Council in their role as the accountable body for this project. GH said that the Marches LEP Board was accountable for the outputs and needed the information on outputs to be received in a timely fashion from Herefordshire Council. Members expressed concern at the delay. EC apologised on behalf of Herefordshire Council and said that this would be followed up.</p> <p>The Board noted the 2020/21 outturn position relating to the Getting Building Fund Programme, as set out in section 1 of the report.</p> <p>The Board noted the 2020/21 outturn position relating to the Local Growth Fund Programme, as set out in section 2.1 of the report.</p> <p>The Board noted the Quarter 4 performance position relating to the Local Growth Fund Programme, as set out in section 2.2 of the report.</p>	EC, RA
10.	<p>Report from Performance Risk & Monitoring Committee (PRMC) meeting on 29 April 2021</p> <p>SR introduced the report and said that it was unacceptable that there remained so much uncertainty around the ongoing employment of LEP staff, due to the lack of information on core funding from government. MT noted that the other funding streams were also yet to be confirmed/monies received – Marches Growth Hub and Careers & Enterprise Company. SE reported that MHCLG were in daily discussions with Treasury regarding the funds, but that it was useful to have these</p>	

	<p>messages on both the financial and the personal issues to relay back. OH said that Growth Hub funding was currently going through contracting and confirmation should be received within the next 2 weeks.</p> <p>SR congratulated the whole LEP team on achieving the 'met' rating for 'Delivery', which was a fantastic achievement; and thanked IB and WR for their work on the commissioning of the new Marches LEP website.</p> <p>EC asked if climate change was noted as a risk in the risk registers. SR said that this, along with other indicators was being considered as part of the review of commissioning.</p> <p>Board members noted of the outcomes of the last PRMC meeting on 29 April 2021 and the latest changes to the Strategic and Programme Risk Registers.</p>	
11.	<p>LEP Chair/CEO report</p> <p>CEO recruitment process – MT said that the proposed structure of the interview process would be distributed to Board members. Members who wished to take part in the sifting process and appointment panel were asked to contact GH.</p> <p>The Board noted the contents of the report.</p>	GH
12.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>Nil</p>	
13.	<p><i>The meeting was suspended at 6.18pm and except for GH, JW, NA and IB all non-Board Members left the meeting at this point.</i></p> <p><i>The meeting re-convened at 6.19pm in closed session.</i></p>	
	<p>Next Meeting of the Board of The Marches LEP Limited: 4pm on Tuesday 20 July 2021 at Ludlow Racecourse</p>	

Signed (electronically):

Mandy Thorn MBE DL, Chair Marches LEP

Date: 20 July 2021