

THE MARCHES LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP LIMITED					
BOARD MEETING					
Tuesday 25 January 2022			3.30 pm – 5.15 pm		
Remote meeting via Zoom					
AGENDA					
Item	Time		Lead	Purpose	Paper
1.	3.30 pm	Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest	MT		
2.	3.30 pm	Board Member Appointment – Cllr Lee Carter, Telford & Wrekin Council	MT	Approval	X
3.	3.35 pm	Minutes of The Marches LEP Ltd Board meeting on 30 November 2021 - Matters Arising - Ratification of decisions made by correspondence	MT		X
4.	3.40 pm	LEP Chair and CEO Report including: - Update on LEP Review - Staffing update - Budget Update	MT/RL	Information	X
5.	3.55 pm	Update from Business Support Steering Group	D Courteen	Information	
6.	4.10 pm	Report from the Performance Risk & Monitoring Committee (PRMC) meeting on 16 December 2021	SR/IB	Information	X
7.	4.20 pm	Committee Delegation	MT	Discussion & Approval	X
8.	4.30 pm	Programme update - Local Growth Fund - Getting Building Fund	NA	Information	X
9.	4.40 pm	Careers and Enterprise Hub delivery model	MT	Discussion	X
10.	4.50 pm	Delivery Plan 2022/23	MT	Discussion	
11.	4.55 pm	Board 'Away Day'	MT	Discussion	
12.	5.05 pm	Any Other Business			

Future Meetings

At locations to potentially include Telford Campus, University of Wolverhampton; Telford College; Ludlow Racecourse; Flaxmill Maltings, Shrewsbury; as restrictions allow.

Mar	<p>22 March 2022, 3.00 pm – 5.15 pm (format/location TBC)</p> <p>Agenda Items (other than standing items):</p> <p>Annual Board membership review Annual Delivery Plan 2022/23 Energy Update Update on Food & Drink and Innovation (C Snell?) Review of LEP Board Terms of Reference Annual Performance Review DIT Export Strategy</p>
May	<p>Accountability and Assurance Framework annual review Marches LEP Skills Advisory Panel Update Transport Update Telford Land Deal update</p>
July	<p>Marches Business Support Steering Group Update</p>
Sept	<p>Marches LEP Annual Report and AGM</p>
Nov	<p>Mid-Year Review feedback</p>

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Meeting date:	25 January 2022				
Agenda Item:	Item 2				
Item Subject:	Board Member Appointment				
For:	Discussion		Decision	x	Information

Purpose of the Paper:

To propose the confirmation of the appointment of a new director of Marches LEP Ltd.

Summary of Recommendations:

That Board members:

1. Confirm the appointment of Cllr Lee Carter as the public sector alternate director of Marches LEP Ltd. for Telford & Wrekin Council.

Main points

Appointment of Public Sector Alternate Director – Cllr Lee Carter

Cllr David Wright stood down as a member of the Cabinet of Telford & Wrekin Council at the end of December 2021 and therefore also relinquished his role as an alternate director of Marches LEP Ltd.

Cllr Lee Carter, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services, Regeneration and the High Street has been nominated as the new alternate director. Cllr Carter has previously served on the LEP Board from September 2019 to January 2020. He has consented to his appointment and therefore, in accordance with the Articles of Association section 20, **members of the Board are asked to confirm the appointment of Cllr Lee Carter as a public sector alternate director of Marches LEP Ltd with immediate effect.**

Report Author: Ennis Vingoe, Marches LEP Executive Assistant

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**Draft Minutes of the Marches LEP Ltd Board Meeting
 30 November 2021 at 3.30pm via Zoom
 (Company Number: 11822614)**

Present:

Mandy Thorn MBE DL	MT	Chair, Marches LEP
Sonia Roberts	SR	Deputy Chair Marches LEP; Equality & Diversity Champion; CEO Landau Limited
Frank Myers MBE	FM	Herefordshire Business Board Chair
Will Westley	WW	Telford Business Board Chair
Andrew Manning Cox	AMC	Hereford Enterprise Zone Chair
Cllr David Hitchiner	DH	Leader, Herefordshire Council
Cllr Ed Potter	EP	Deputy Leader, Shropshire Council
Cllr David Wright	DW	Cabinet Member for Economy, Housing, Transport and Infrastructure, Telford & Wrekin Council
Graham Guest	GG	Skills Advisory Panel Chair; Chief Executive and Principal of Telford College
Paul Kalinauckas	PK	Access to Finance Champion
Christine Snell	CS	Business Partner, AJ & CI Snell
Gordon Coppock	GC	Energy and NET Zero Champion
Catherine Baxter	CB	Higher Education Champion; University Secretary, Harper Adams University

In Attendance:

James Walton	JW	Section 151 Officer, Shropshire Council
Neil Taylor	NT	Interim Director of Economy and Place, 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/Area Lead, West Midlands Team, Cities & Local Growth Unit, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
Rachel Laver	RL	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
Tim Yair	TY	Regional Senior Energy Projects Officer, Midlands Energy Hub
Ennis Vingoe	EV	Executive Assistant, Marches LEP
Wayne Redge	WR	Office Administrator, Marches LEP

Observers:

Amy Bould	AB	Be Bold Ltd
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ITEM		ACTION
1.	<p>Welcome</p> <p>1. Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest</p> <p>MT thanked everyone for attending the meeting and welcomed Graham Guest to his first meeting as Chair of the Skills Advisory Panel. Apologies were received from Beth Heath.</p> <p>MT apologised for the late change from an in-person meeting at the Shell Store, Skylon Park, Hereford to a fully online meeting due to concerns over the potentially increasing COVID risk. She noted that the meeting was being recorded to aid the production of the minutes.</p>	

	<p>- the construction of a new campus building for NMITE was underway. Collaboration with NMITE in terms of internships, training, projects and engineering was already taking place across the enterprise zone.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Assets</i> <p>- the Shell Store had been completed earlier this year. It had been possible to preserve elements of the original historic building. 35 incubation spaces were available within the building and 10 tenants should be in situ by the end of 2021. The building had recently won the Insider Property Award for the West Midlands for Commercial Development of the Year.</p> <p>- the Cyber Quarter building was now complete. There was space for 16 tenants with 4 already signed up.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Skylon Park progress since 2012</i> <p>58 new businesses had moved into the zone; 58 of 110 acres had been sold for development; 60,100sq m of workspace had been developed; there were 1065 current and new jobs on occupation and 1101 further jobs in company growth plans. Interest in the enterprise zone had remained strong during the COVID pandemic and it was a real success story.</p> <p>MT wished to formally record congratulations to the HEZ team for winning the Insider Property Award and thanked AMC for the informative presentation.</p>	
5.	<p>LEP Chair and CEO Report MT referred members to the report and <i>asked everyone to read the appendices to the report and email any queries to her or RL.</i></p>	All
6.	<p>Update from The Marches Energy Steering Group GC provided an update on the Marches LEP Energy Strategy Review and went through the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good relationships had been developed with Western Power Distribution and Scottish Power but developing a pilot project had been more problematic, looking at a number of different funding sources. • Active Network Management would come online in this region over the next 18 months to enable more generation in a smart way. • A target of Renewable Energy locally meeting 50% of demand had been set. This was currently around 17% due to grid restrictions slowing growth, and planning issues with wind turbines. Work was continuing on this with a number of projects in the Marches. • The aim for 1,000 new jobs in the low carbon and renewable energy sector was going well with increased growth continuing. • The fuel poverty target was to reduce it to below 10% in this area. The latest data showed that it had increased to 16.5%. Funding in the Marches to improve 'fuel poverty homes' did not cover sufficient numbers and was disjointed. Training of local builders was difficult due to lack of training provision and builders being so busy. • Anaerobic digestion –the use of slurry and food waste was encouraged but there were some issues with the digestate releasing greenhouse gases and must be carefully controlled. • Creation of a centre for UK agriculture innovation and low carbon transition – this was at Harper Adams University (HAU). • Emissions of CO2 in the Marches –the highest proportion of emissions was from buildings (approx. 44%), with transport next and then livestock. • Carbon emissions excluding agriculture had reduced in line with UK targets, a 57% reduction on 1990 levels. However, national targets were now changing. Overall, the total energy demand and subsequent carbon emissions need to be reduced. Carbon literacy training and training for builders to retrofit buildings was desperately required. 	

	<p>GC said that it was a significant challenge working to meet all these targets simultaneously.</p> <p>CB said that HAU had been in discussion with GC regarding the initiatives currently being undertaken there, and with partners. There was some debate about the efficacy of the carbon literacy training being offered and HAU was working with partners on this. The availability of local training providers and the availability of builders to attend the training were also issues.</p> <p>FM noted that the Community Foundations were running schemes where those in receipt of the Winter Fuel Allowance who didn't need it could donate it someone in need to help meet their energy bills. Members were invited to help promote this initiative.</p> <p>Members discussed a number of areas covered in the presentation. GC said that Active Network Management was intended to maximise the use of generated power to increase the power to the grid. Ultimately more wind generation would be required, and this was where community energy was so important as it engaged with communities to increase the knowledge of where their power comes from and consequently, reduce the opposition to these projects.</p> <p>GG suggested that the LEP should look strategically at meeting the skills need in the Marches in order to increase low carbon jobs. It was agreed that he and GC would meet separately to discuss this.</p> <p>MT commented that there had been a great deal of interest in this topic from members and that GC would provide a further update in March 2022. Members were invited to email GC separately with any further queries, copying in the LEP Team.</p> <p>MT thanked GC for his informative presentation and members for the valuable discussion.</p>	<p>All</p> <p>GG, GC</p> <p>GC All</p>
7.	<p>Programme update</p> <p>MT reiterated that items 7 and 8 were for information only and NA gave a brief overview of the paper.</p> <p>Local Growth Fund (LGF)</p> <p>It was reported that all projects awarded LGF funds at the September 2021 Emergency LEP Board meeting had been contracted. Members noted the Quarter 1 & 2 performance position relating to the LGF Programme. Notable achievements included 130 jobs created/safeguarded, 82 homes completed, 505 apprentices and £14.8m of Match Funding.</p> <p>Getting Building Funds (GBF)</p> <p>Members noted the Quarter 2 performance position relating to the GBF Programme.</p>	
8.	<p>Hereford City Centre Improvements (HCCI) and Integrated Construction Wetlands (ICW)</p> <p>HCCI</p> <p>NA confirmed that Herefordshire Council had received the Final Varied HCCI Funding Agreement for signature and seal. It was anticipated the sign-off process would be completed over the coming days.</p> <p>ICW</p> <p>NA confirmed that the LEP had received outstanding information from the project on Friday 26 November and Monday 29 November 2021, enabling a Draft Agreement to be released within the next few days.</p> <p>RL wished to thank NA, the LEP programme team and Herefordshire Council colleagues for their hard work on getting these funding agreements completed.</p>	

9.	<p>Telford and Wrekin Council Marches Investment Fund (MIF) funding extension request</p> <p>RL referred members to the paper which explained that in July 2020, Telford & Wrekin Council had been awarded a revenue grant of £168,216 to support strategic tourism and business initiatives. An initial extension to the expenditure period was granted by the LEP Board from 30 October 2020 to 31 March 2021. At the January 2021 LEP Board meeting, a further extension was granted to 31 July 2021 due to the restrictions caused by the pandemic. As of August 2021, of the original grant, £65,216 remained uncommitted. Telford & Wrekin had requested that this amount be re-profiled to finance a number of on-going costs relating to Telford's MIF projects, which would be put at risk if the remaining funding allocation had to be returned.</p> <p>The Board approved Telford & Wrekin Council's request to re-profile £65,234 of MIF funding, which must be spent by 31 March 2022 at the latest (unanimous).</p>	
10.	<p>Tourism and Place marketing</p> <p>RL said that the LEP did not currently actively promote place marketing or tourism, although the LAs do. She asked members and officers if the LEP should provide support for this work.</p> <p>A wide-ranging discussion took place, and a number of points were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The local authorities provide significant promotion and marketing for tourism but there was also a need to promote the Marches as a good place to live and work. • Many visitors come to the area for day trips rather than overnight or longer stays. Visitors staying longer would provide a boost to the local food industries and wellbeing sector. • A collaborative approach was required with LAs, large employers eg NHS, and SMEs to encourage workers to settle in the area to help fill the huge numbers of vacancies. • Destination – inward investors were interested in the land available and the financial deals in the area but also the quality of life for families and the additional benefits. Telford for instance had existing initiatives in collaboration with large employers who were struggling to recruit, to promote the area for investors and assisting with transporting employees etc. There could be a role for the LEP in an overarching approach and in engagement with investors. • How to support skills development was important. • The narrative around 'why the Marches' was important; and what is 'the Marches'. The LEP needs to be very clear about this place narrative. • Growing the social enterprise economy, social investment and how to attract professionals to the area was key. A wider connected discussion about how place feels in the wider Marches area was needed. • Place marketing needs to bring all the strands of work together that we do to a wider place-shaping piece. It may not necessarily be about promoting the Marches as a place as not many people know what it is. We may need to look at what we can do with the resources we've got, and this would include skills and how to promote vacancies. How we could work with colleagues in the NHS for example, to help fill vacancies and to promote assets could be explored. <i>RL to follow up with relevant stakeholders.</i> 	RL
11.	<p>Report from the Performance Risk & Monitoring Committee (PRMC) meeting on 28 October 2021</p> <p>SR wished to draw members' attention to the fact that due to the uncertainty in the outcome of the LEP Review, that some PRMC work areas would be re-scheduled eg the inclusive economy and diversity policy review. At the last PRMC meeting</p>	

	<p>LEP funding and the uncertainty for the LEP officers was noted as a significant concern. This uncertainty was the biggest risk the LEP was facing. There were some changes being made to how the risk registers would be presented to make them clearer. The 5 main risks would be brought to the top of each Risk Register.</p> <p>MT reiterated that the uncertainty was having a huge impact on the work the LEP was doing.</p>	
12.	<p>Update on Marches LEP Delivery Plan 2021-22</p> <p>IB went through the report updating on progress with delivery plan actions. Some actions had been stalled due to the uncertainties of the LEP Review. These were highlighted in red, but some progress had been made on these.</p>	
13.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>MT said that it was hoped that the outcome of LEP Review will have been published by the next meeting of the LEP Board in January 2022.</p>	
<p>Next Meeting: 25 January 2022 location TBC</p>		

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Meeting date:	25 th January 2022					
Agenda Item:	4					
Item Subject:	Marches LEP Chair and Chief Executive Officer's Report					
For:	Discussion	X	Decision		Information	X

Purpose of the Paper: To provide Board Members with a brief overview of LEP's activities not reported elsewhere.

Summary of Recommendations: That Board Members note the content of the Report.

1. Executive Summary

The Levelling up White paper continues to be delayed which leaves the LEP still unclear about its future despite warm words from some government officials. The latest expectation is that it will be published by the end of January with the LEP Review to follow. The delays are beginning to have a real impact on the team and making it very difficult to plan activity for 22/23 with no clear idea what the remit of LEPs will be.

The Marches LEP annual report was published in December and coupled with the PR we did around the lack of clarity about the future of LEPs massively increased awareness of the Marches LEP and its online reach. PR did drop off prior to this though which was a result of Purdah during the North Shropshire byelection.

Following revisions to the LEP structure and some reductions in costs we profile that the LEP can trade through to the end of the March 23, regardless of the core funding position. We won't be able to deliver at the optimum level without the core funding, but we'll be able to manage all existing contracts with the funding we do have.

While we continue to wait in earnest for the results of the LEP Review, in anticipation of the LEPs still having a role, it's important that we explore new avenues of work and new opportunities to help make the LEP more sustainable. We are looking at an opportunity to deliver Skills Bootcamps following an invite from DfE to all LEPs.

2. LEP Annual Performance review

The Annual Performance review meeting is scheduled for the 26th January. No issues are anticipated as long as all the remaining funds are contracted by this date. While the delays with projects have given some cause for concern, we feel we can demonstrate that the delays have been outside of the LEP's control, and we have taken all appropriate actions to mitigate the impact of the delays.

3. West Midlands LEP Chair

Mandy has been formally appointed as the West Midlands LEP Chair. This is great for the Marches LEP as it allows our views to be heard and discussed at a higher level. The role meant Mandy was one of only four people that represented the LEP network at a meeting with Rt Hon Kwasi Kwarteng MP and Neil O'Brien MP before Christmas to discuss the future of LEPs.

The feedback from the meeting was very positive, with Ministers recognising the value the LEPs bring, and the '**fantastic things**' LEPs have made happen by bringing the business perspectives. While greater detail and confirmation will follow in the Levelling Up White Paper, the Secretary of State confirmed that LEPs **will have a role going forward**. They both stressed their respect and appreciation for our work and that this view was also shared by SoS DLUHC who is equally committed to LEPs having a future role in Levelling Up.

Ministers and officials pointed to the detail that had come out of the LEP Review, which had led to a **far greater understanding and appreciation** of the role LEPs play and wanted to extend their thanks to those who had given so much time to that work, while also recognising the challenges the extended period of uncertainty had brought.

Officials highlighted the comments of the DLUHC SoS around **strengthening the democratic institutions** and would want to work with us post White Paper on what that looks like, again building on the work of the LEP Review. In discussion, it was also clarified that given the variety of existing local governance structures **“it is not a one size fits all approach”**, which again points to the need for far greater collaborative working going forward. SoS BEIS made a commitment for greater engagement with Ministers alongside that.

4. Levelling UP White Paper

Following the meeting mentioned above, the latest expectation is that the Levelling Up White Paper will be completed at the end of January although feedback from other sources is that it could be delayed further.

It is important that we continue to promote the work and achievements of LEPs and actively engage with MPs.

5. Staffing

The new Careers Hub lead, Andriané Usherwood-Brown is due to start on the 24th January. She comes with a great deal of knowledge of the Careers Hub and will be a valuable addition to the team.

Ilia Bowles, Director of Corporate services has resigned, with her last day being the 15th February. As previously discussed with the Board this post will be removed from the team structure as a cost saving. Wayne Redge, Office Administrator, has also resigned and will finish on the 4th February. An advert for his replacement is currently live.

We thank both Ilia and Wayne for all their hard work and commitment since joining the LEP and wish them the very best in their new endeavours.

6. Finance

6.1. Tax

We've had a further review of the LEPs tax position. The advice is that nothing can be done to reduce the corporation tax at this time. We've asked the advisors to look again at the VAT the LEP pays on salaries (as this is a service delivered via our Accountable Body) and await a response. This year we are expected to pay £98k in VAT on salaries as all the staff are employed by Shropshire Council, one option we're exploring further, is bringing all the staff on to the LEP books. We are seeking clarity on whether the staff could stay members of the Local Government pension scheme if we did this. The LEP currently pays all the pension costs associated with the team through the SLA, so it is hoped that this is a viable option which would potentially present a significant saving to the LEP.

6.2. Financial position 21/22

A full breakdown of the financial position to December 21 is included in Appendix 1. The latest forecast is that we'll exceed income by £331k this year which will be offset by balances carried forward from previous years.

6.3. Budget for 22/23

The budget for 22/23 is being finalised with the recent changes incorporated. If we don't receive core funding of £500k the LEP will still be able to trade to the end of March 23 with an expected surplus of £67k, this includes allowing for redundancy next year. On this basis staff contracts will be extended until end of March 2023 to help give comfort and assurance. (Appendix 2)

Our costs will still exceed our income next year by £158k if we ignore the balance carried forward and the redundancy allowance, so a key task for next year will be to increase income as it will be difficult to cut costs much further.

7. Defence Cluster

We are doing some initial work with Worcester LEP and the private sector to further develop and promote the Defence Cluster and help businesses in Hereford and Worcester bid for opportunities as they come forward. Along with Worcester LEP we have been asked if we can make a staff commitment of 0.5 days which clearly isn't possible at the moment. We're waiting for the business case to see what support we can provide for this priority sector.

8. Skills Bootcamps

LEPs have the opportunity to bid to deliver the third wave of Skills Bootcamps and the deadline has been extended until the middle of February to take account of the Levelling Up White Paper. The intention is to bid to deliver the bootcamps but only if the project costs can be fully funded rather than subsidised out of core funding. This is a good opportunity for the LEP and hopefully one of many opportunities for the LEP to diversify this year.

9. PR & Marketing Activity Report for the Marches LEP and Marches Growth Hub (MGH)

The PR and Marketing update is included in Appendix 3.

10. Business Support

The Marches Business Support (MBS) Steering Group met on 9 December 2021. Members received the following update/presentation:

- New MGH PR/Marketing report detailing activity and impact including a Q2 update.
- New MGH light touch data Power Bi dashboard: [Microsoft Power BI](#);
- April – September 2021 MGH medium, high and sustained interaction data analysis: [Marches Growth Hub Business Enquiry & Interaction Analysis \(arcgis.com\)](#); and
- Draft International trade strategic plan and Ideas for future LEP/DIT collaboration.

The West Midlands Growth Hub cluster is continuing to support regional activity and aid communication with BEIS.

Further details of the planned Business Support Reform by BEIS are awaited alongside news of Growth Hub future funding through LEPs.

11. Peer Networks

The Marches' three cohorts are now up and running with a total of 29 participants receiving support. Positive feedback has been received from participating businesses and this is being amplified in current Marches LEP communications. The Marches LEP team is

undertaking quality assurance, reporting and financial management as required under the grant funding agreement and is also supporting the national evaluation process.

BEIS has now confirmed that there will be no further funding for the Peer Networks project beyond this financial year. The LEP team will, therefore, work with the delivery partner, Neale Lewis Associates, to complete all project activities within the end of year deadlines. Businesses will be encouraged to seek alternative support through local, regional and national programmes delivered and promoted through the Marches Growth Hub.

12. Skills and Labour Market Support Marches Skills Advisory Panel

The Skills Advisory Panel (SAP) met on 16 December 2021. Its Chair, Graham Guest, facilitated a discussion on ways in which the SAP could take the lead in future proofing the Marches skills agenda in line with the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill. Partner feedback from the meeting is being collated and this will inform an update of the Terms of Reference and review of SAP membership to ensure alignment with national and local skills priorities.

The Marches LEP team is working with the Black Country Consortium, Hatch and SAP partners to update the Marches Local Skills Report which was submitted to the Department for Education in March 2021. The update, to be completed by the end of January 2022, will focus on actions completed in addressing priorities within the report's action plan and will provide updates on the Marches' skills needs, labour market challenges and sector opportunities.

Financial implications: None

Legal implications: None

Risks, opportunities and impacts: None

Equality implications: None

Additional information/ attachments:

[Appendix 1 – Core Funding summary](#)

[Appendix 2 – Draft budget for 22/23](#)

[Appendix 3 – PR & Marketing update](#)

Background papers/documents: None

Report Authors:

Mandy Thorn MBE DL, Marches LEP Chair

Rachel Laver, Marches LEP CEO

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Meeting date:	25 January 2022				
Agenda Item:	Item 6				
Item Subject:	Report from the Performance Risk & Monitoring Committee (PRMC) meeting on 16 December 2021				
For:	Discussion		Decision		Information X

Purpose of the Paper: To report on the PRMC meeting on 16 December 2021 and highlight the main 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 16 December 2021 and the main changes to the Strategic and Programme Risk Registers.

Summary of PRMC meeting on 16 December 2021

- Herefordshire Council (HC) provided a presentation on the Integrated Wetlands project. An agreement had previously been made for the project to spend £377k by March 2022 with the balance to be spent by October 2022. HC asked for the October deadline to be moved to December 2022. This request was to be circulated to the LEP Board for a decision by written resolution.
- In the Programme Risk Register, some risks had been updated and two new ones added (details on pages 3-7 below). There had been no changes to the risks within the Strategic Risk Register but the top five risks had been moved to the top as requested at the previous PRMC meeting.
- Operating costs and team structure amendments had been approved by the LEP Board.
- The LEP Chair had met with MP Kwasi Kwarteng who stated that LEPs had a future and agreed to meet more regular.
- The Levelling Up White Paper had been delayed again and is now due towards the mid-January. Outcome of the LEP review would follow.
- Remaining £250k of core funding had been confirmed and expected before Christmas. No clarification had been received on LEP core funding for 2022/23.
- Some LEPs had been given permission to use their Growing Places funding (MIF) towards operating costs to continue trading. If this was applicable to the Marches LEP and no further core funding was received, this would allow the company to continue trading through financial year 2022/23.
- On Local Growth Fund (LGF), all projects that were awarded the grant from the returned LGF funding had been contracted and confirmed they would be able to spend their LGF values, except for Oswestry Innovation Park. The Programme Team were chasing this project for further details; however, on the basis that no correspondence had been received that expressed concern over spending the funds, a full spend against LGF in the current financial year was anticipated.
Hereford Enterprise Zone had offset their Freedoms & Flexibilities. Primary Care Tannery's Freedoms & Flexibilities would be offset in Q4. The Programme Team had not been able to meet with Connecting Shropshire so were chasing them to understand their spending profile. Timescales had not aligned to allow Q2 LGF return for 2021/22 to have been sent to PRMC before the return was submitted to Government. Tangible outputs for the LEP's investment could be seen over the past six months which represented some major achievements for the LEP.

- On Getting Building Fund (GBF), all projects were being met with monthly and claims were continuing to be received at pace. Hereford City Centre Improvement agreement was due to be sealed by the project's accountable body w/c 20th December 2021. Pride Hill was going through an internal review; however, the project would meet its spend obligations. Tackling Fuel Poverty was confident of achieving its spend and some tangible outputs were being seen. The managing and reporting of the NMITE project sat with Herefordshire Council, who reported into the LEP. It had become clear that a retaining wall needed to be built in relation to the Stronger Communities project which was affecting its delivery. If this was built first, it would cost £550k, if it was built once the main development work was complete, it would cost £300k. Telford & Wrekin Council were asking that the spend date be delayed allowing for the retaining wall to be built after the main development work was completed. Approval was to be requested from the LEP Board by written resolution.
- There was a potential for a Marches-wide fund to be launched. Herefordshire Council had engaged a consultant to look at putting together a fund within the county. The LEP CEO had asked for the research to be conducted as a joint venture and the LEP and Shropshire Council had also looked at commissioning similar work.
- On Business Support, the three Growth Hubs were confident of spending their full allocation for 2021/22 FY. Peer Networks project was being delivered through a sub-contractor and all three cohorts had been successfully recruited to. Claims to BEIS had been submitted in line with grant funding agreement and detailed project monitoring had been completed through online dashboard. There was no clarity on funding for 2022/23. Key Account Management projects were being delivered through local authority teams. Delivery had improved on the previous financial year but partners would need to focus on supporting the identified investment projects in coming to fruition. Monthly reports/claims to DIT were up to date. Discussions were being held with DIT to understand potential future funding past 31st March 2022.
- On Skills support, on Marches Careers Hub, grant funding agreements with each local authority partner were in place to confirm funding and targets to 31 August 2022. The vacant Hub Lead post had been recruited to and should be filled by 24 January 2022 (subject to final pre-employment checks). There were vacant posts in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin, affecting delivery. These were being advertised but the short contract term (to 31 August 2022 in line with the funding from the Careers & Enterprise Company) was a barrier to people applying. On Skills Advisory Panel, DfE funding agreement was in place until 31 March 2022. Activity and expenditure were in line with the agreed MOU. The Local Skills Report needed to be updated and submitted to DfE by 29 January 2022. External resource was still to be secured to support this (no responses were received in response to a recent tendering opportunity) to ensure that the report meets DfE requirements. There was no information on funding for 2022/23.
- The LEP CEO had explained that how DIT operates was due to change and that they had drafted a strategy for the Marches area for the LEP to sign off. More research needed to be done into emerging and key sectors. The Marches LEP should use the Growth Hub to make links more effectively between businesses and DIT support. It was agreed that draft strategy would go to the LEP Board for approval and that this could form the basis of the export strategy for the LEPs which was the equivalent of the Strategic Economic Plan.
- The LEP CEO had asked to amend the PRMC TORs to allow for a limited additional amount of delegated authority. Some members expressed concerns over this; however, it was agreed that a proposal should be discussed at the January Board Meeting. Since resigning in July, R Shepherd had not been replaced as a fourth Board member on PRMC. PRMC should consider recruiting into this post so that the committee could have four Board members. It was agreed that minutes of PRMC meetings should be published on the LEP

website; however, anything that was commercially sensitive should be redacted. A paper would go to the LEP Board in January setting out the proposal.

Risks table score key based on likelihood and impact

Low		Medium		High	
1	2	3	4	5	9

New Risk added to the Programme (P) Risk Register:

Risk No	P3.23	Date of Next Review	1 April 2022
Risk Description	The completion of the Hereford City Centre Transport Package (HCCTP) impacting on the achievement of contracted LGF deliverables.		
Risk Rating	4	Target Score	2
Risk Mitigation	<p>The HCCTP project consists of 3 elements: construction of a new City Link Road; a new Transport Hub; Public Realm improvements on key routes into the city. Through its monitoring process the LEP was notified the City Link Road had been completed but increased costs mean there were insufficient funds to deliver the remaining elements of the project. On 22 July 2021 Herefordshire Council's Cabinet agreed to disaggregate the elements of the project, allocating the remaining funds to deliver the transport hub and to consider the public realm element as part of a wider assessment of public realm and sustainable connectivity.</p> <p>On 2 December 2021 the LEP Team met with Herefordshire Council representatives. It was explained a new Interim Capital Delivery team has been put in place by Herefordshire Council to deliver the HCCTP project. In addition to the regular quarterly monitoring process, it has been agreed that interim meetings will be convened between the LEP and Herefordshire Council to review the implementation of the Cabinet decision, the trajectory of outputs and any associated risks to delivery. Once delivery elements of the project have been finalised a varied Funding Agreement will be drafted, reflecting the revised project.</p>		
Risk No	P3.24	Date of Next Review	1 April 2022
Risk Description	External factors or changing market conditions create delays or constrain delivery of projects.		
Risk Rating	4	Target Score	2
Risk Mitigation	Each project has a Funding Agreement which sets out an agreed position in relation to the delivery of the project - including outputs, milestones and expenditure. Through the LEP's Programme Management processes and procedures all projects claiming grant funds are required to submit monthly claim & progress reports and also undertake quarterly monitoring visits. This enables both the Project promotor to provide accurate information relating to delivery and the LEP to understand the risk to the overall grant programme.		

Main amendments to the Programme (P) Risk Register:

Risk No	P3.4	Date of Next Review	1 April 2022
Risk Description	Delivery partners fail to deliver projects on time & to budget leading to underspend against government annual Growth Deal profile.		
Risk Rating	6	Target Score	4

Risk Mitigation	<p>Projects are being monitored closely ahead of the LGF spend deadline on 31 March 2021. In addition to regular monitoring meetings, interim monthly cial meetings were scheduled to ensure spend targets are met. The team worked closely with projects to monitor LGF spend and identify risks ahead of programme closure on 31 March 2021. The implementation of variations and Freedoms & Flexibilities agreements as risk mitigation enabled projects to spend by year end, with a final LGF outturn position of £104,887,505 by 31 March 2021. On 7th September 2021 the LEP Board agreed additional funding for five existing LGF projects (Oswestry, HEZ, Stronger Communities, Bishops Castle and Advanced Manufacturing) to complete spend by 31 March 2022. The projects will submit monthly claims and progress reports and have quarterly monitoring meetings with the LEP to monitor grant spend. Interim monthly finance meetings are being held through Q4 of 2021/22 to monitor the newly contracted LGF spend as well as any outstanding Freedoms & Flexibilities ahead of the spend deadline of 31 March 2022.</p>		
Risk No	P3.18	Date of Next Review	1 April 2022
Risk Description	<p>The Integrated Construction Wetlands project is unable to negotiate the purchasing of land from owners, impacting on the projects ability to spend their full Getting Building Fund allocation by 31 March 2022.</p>		
Risk Rating	6	Target Score	2
Risk Mitigation	<p>The information to be provided by Herefordshire Council as set out on 12 May 2021 remains outstanding. The LEP's records show that claims/monitoring forms have not been submitted since 12 April 2021 and to date no funds have been claimed by the project. At a meeting held with Herefordshire Council on the 9th August, the LEP requested an updated claim/progress report covering the periods missed as well as the outstanding information as set out on 12 May 2021 - including updated project finances, milestones (progress on land acquisitions, planning permissions etc) and outputs, enabling a revised funding agreement to be drafted. The LEP are keen to work with the Council to understand the current position and gain assurances on their ability to spend £1,000,000 by 31st March 2022. Following the meeting the LEP requested all outstanding information be provided by COP on 17th August - at the time of writing (19/08/2021) this has not been provided. Following discussions with the LEP Chair, Vice-Chair and Pre-PRMC members it has been agreed that an agreed solution would need to be found by 17 September 2021, in preparation for the 28 September LEP Board Meeting - mitigating risk to the LEP and the GBF Programme.</p> <p>At the meeting on 28 September 2021 the LEP Board agreed to set a deadline of 23 November 2021 for Herefordshire Council to provide a final position to the LEP enabling a contract variation to be signed-off by the deadline. Delegated authority was given to the LEP Chief Executive, LEP Programme Manager and Section 151 Officer (in consultation with the LEP Chair and Vice Chair) to agree and vary the existing Funding Agreement in line with the objectives and scope of their original agreement. Herefordshire Council has provided information setting out a revised delivery proposal in relation to land purchases and associated risks, with 2 options for the LEP to consider which were presented to PRMC at the meeting on 28 October 2021.</p> <p>Following the 28 October PRMC meeting, on 10 November 2021 the project provided the LEP with updated spend figures confirming the</p>		

	<p>2021/22 FY GBF spend profile would be significantly lower (£377k) than the Option 1 spend profile (GBF spend deadline of 31 March 2022) presented to PRMC (£670K). Following discussions on 19 November 2021 between Rachel Laver (Marches LEP, Chief Executive) and Andrew Lovegrove (Herefordshire Council, Section 151 Officer), it was agreed the revised spend position would be accepted. Based on the information provided by the project a draft Funding Agreement variation was issued on 2 December 2021 for review. [Addendum - Following review of the draft funding agreement variation, Herefordshire Council put forward an updated delivery proposal which was presented to PRMC on 16 December 21. On 23 December a written resolution paper was circulated to LEP Board members in relation to the revised proposal. The LEP Board approved the recommendation not to approve the revised proposal. The LEP Board approved the recommendation that the project proceeds with the delegated approval decision reflected in the draft funding agreement variation as circulated on 2 December 21.]</p>		
Risk No	P3.19	Date of Next Review	1 April 2022
Risk Description	Projects do not fulfil their obligations in relation to the utilisation of Freedoms & Flexibilities.		
Risk Rating	6	Target Score	2
Risk Mitigation	Interim monthly finance monitoring meetings are being held through Q4 2021/22 to monitor the position closely ahead of the deadline of 31 March 2022.		
Risk No	P3.20	Date of Next Review	1 April 2022
Risk Description	Proposed merger of the Oxon Link Road with the Shrewsbury North West Relief Road (SNWRR) may impact on milestones and delivery of outputs.		
Risk Rating	6	Target Score	2
Risk Mitigation	<p>At the 7th November 2019 Emergency LEP Board meeting a decision was taken to approve the proposal put forward by Shropshire Council to merge the existing Oxon Link Road scheme with the Shrewsbury North West Relief Road (SNWRR). Following meetings with Legal Services (Accountable Body) it was deemed fulfilling the request to merge the projects into one LEP Funding Agreement would not be in the best interests of either party, exposing both to unnecessary risk. It has been formally agreed (set out in monitoring visits) that the Project Officer would provide the LEP with the latest updates to the Board on the approach being taken to deliver the OLR and its links to the SNWRR, including revised milestones. The LEP have attempted to obtain the requested information, which has not been provided to date. The lack of clarity around the delivery of this project (milestones, outputs, match funding) presents a risk to the LGF Programme. The OLR project team were invited to provide an update at the PRMC meeting on 28th October 2021 for PRMC to consider risk. Following PRMC, the LEP emailed the project lead on 10 November 2021 requesting specific information to enable the Funding Agreement to be varied and confirmation of the governance position in preparation for the January LEP Board. A response has been received confirming the actions are being worked through. [Addendum - the LEP emailed the project lead on 5 January with a request to meet to discuss the formal position paper required for the January board meeting on the 25th and an update on the actions from the email sent on the 10 November. To date no response has been received.]</p>		

Risk No	P3.21	Date of Next Review	1 April 2022
Risk Description	The Hereford City Centre Improvements project may not spend their Freedoms and Flexibilities or Overall GBF Grant allocation by 31 March 2022.		
Risk Rating	6	Target Score	2
Risk Mitigation	<p>In order to mitigate risk a variation was prepared in March 21 for the project to utilise £1,389,000 of freedoms and flexibilities for allocated spend in 2020/21 Financial Year (FY). A further request was made by the project for the utilisation of freedoms and flexibilities for their 2021/22 FY allocation - extending the project into 2022/23 FY. A Funding Variation was prepared and sent to the project on the 17th June 2021, with a deadline for comments and associated information to be provided by 24th June 2021. This was not received. A meeting between the LEP and Herefordshire Council was held on the 9th August 2021 to determine a way forward, the LEP requested all outstanding information would be provided by 17th August - at the time of writing (19/08/2021) this has not been provided. Following discussions with the LEP Chair, Vice-Chair and Pre-PRMC members it has been agreed that a solution would need to be found by 17th September 2021, in preparation for the 28 September LEP Board Meeting - mitigating risk to the LEP and the GBF Programme. At the meeting on 28 September 2021 the LEP Board agreed to set a deadline of 23 November 2021 for Herefordshire Council to provide a final position to the LEP enabling a contract variation to be signed by the deadline. Delegated authority was given to the LEP Chief Executive, LEP Programme Manager and Section 151 Officer (in consultation with the LEP Chair and Vice Chair) to agree and vary the existing Funding Agreement in line with the objectives and scope of their original agreement. Herefordshire Council has provided information setting out a revised delivery proposal in relation to the HCCI project which was presented to PRMC at the meeting on 28 October 2021. A Funding Agreement reflecting the delivery proposal presented at the 28 October 2021 PRMC meeting was drafted by the LEP. On 2 December 2021 the LEP were informed Herefordshire Council had sealed the document, posting it to the Accountable Body for sign-off. [Addendum - the variation was fully signed off on 20 December 2021.]</p>		
Risk No	P3.22	Date of Next Review	1 April 2022
Risk Description	The delivery of the Pride Hill Remodelling GBF project may be impacted following a decision by Shropshire Council on 23 September 2021 to pause the project while a review of the Pride Hill, Civic Accommodation and Riverside Development and further market testing is carried out.		
Risk Rating	6	Target Score	2
Risk Mitigation	<p>A decision was taken at the 23 September 2021 Council meeting to pause work on the current proposal in relation to the repurposing of the Pride Hill Centre. Assurances have been given that the decision taken would not impact on the projects ability to spend GBF Grant by 31 March 2022 (due it relating to vacant possession), but could delay the achievement of Outputs and Match Funding values. An update was provided to the LEP at the Q2 monitoring meeting on 8th October 2021. An interim update meeting is being planned for November with a view to the project sharing proposals with the LEP in January 2022 enabling the funding agreement to be varied.</p>		

	A meeting has been scheduled for 15 December 2021 to review the current position of the project. [Addendum - an update was provided to the LEP on 15 December 2021. A further update has been arranged for 17 January 2022.]
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: The uncertainty surrounding the future of LEPs continue to pose a significant risk for the Marches LEP staff, Board and its business partners.	
Equality implications: None	
Additional information/ attachments: 1. Strategic Risk Register 2. Programme Risk Register	
Background papers/documents: None	
Report Author: Ilia Bowles, LEP Director of Corporate Services	

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Meeting date:	25 January 2022				
Agenda Item:	7				
Item Subject:	Committee Delegation				
For:	Discussion	x	Decision	x	Information

Purpose of the Paper:

The paper seeks to set out:

- Proposed changes to the scheme of delegation
- Principles to proposed delegation and changes required.

Summary of Recommendations:

The Board is asked to consider and discuss the following recommendations:

It is recommended that the Board delegate approval powers to PRMC as follows:

- Changes to projects where the projects have already approved by the board. This is to include reprofiling of funding and outputs.
- Detailed approval of projects (full business cases) where the board has already given outline approval
- Approval to appoint new LEP roles in the absence of a remuneration and appointments committee.
- Approval of the LEP executive to bid for new funds up to £1m.
- An additional Board member joins PRMC and that each of the three local authority areas is represented by a board member.

Main points:

In order for the Board to be able to concentrate on the strategic matters and for there to be a level to escalate to, we would like to consider delegating some powers to the PRMC committee.

Given the frequency of the Board meetings and the large number of matters which often need to be considered it might be more appropriate for the very detailed discussions about project performance and changes such as slippage to be discussed and solutions agreed at PRMC.

PRMC meets more frequently than the board and therefore has more opportunity to discuss changes in a timely manner. It is tasked with overseeing the performance of programmes so it is considered appropriate for the committee to be given delegated powers to make decisions within agreed parameters and will support more efficient use of the LEP's limited resources and the time of its board members. It would also prevent as much use of seeking approval for matters by correspondence in between board meetings, which doesn't allow for debate.

It is recommended that the vacant board member post on PMRC is filled and that the committee has board representatives from each of the three local authority areas.

To be quorate, PMRC will only be able to use the delegated powers outlined where there are: the Chair, two Board members (excluding any that have declared a conflict of interest), and the Section 151 officer or deputy present.

Any changes to PRMC membership will have to be approved by the Board.

Cancelling/ withdrawing funding from projects will remain within the remit of the Board. PRMC however will consider underperformance of projects and make recommendations to the Bboard.

Financial implications:

none

Legal implications:

The Terms of Reference for PRMC and the Accountability & Assurance Framework would need updating to reflect any agreed changes.

Risks, opportunities and impacts:

The opportunities are that the proposals free up more time for the Board to concentrate on more strategic matters.

Risk of lack of overview by the Board; however PRMC meeting minutes and updates will be provided at each board meeting.

Equality implications:

n/a but thought should be given to who is the additional PRMC board member and the gender balance on PRMC.

Additional information:

Report Author:

Rachel Laver CEO

Background papers/documents:

[Marches LEP Existing Scheme of Delegation](#)

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Meeting date:	25 January 2022				
Agenda Item:	8				
Item Subject:	Local Growth Fund and Getting Building Fund Programme Update				
For:	Discussion		Decision		Information X

Purpose of the Paper:

- 1) To update Board Members on progress delivering both Local Growth Fund and Getting Building Fund programmes.

Summary of Recommendations:

The Marches LEP Board:

- 1) Notes the position relating to the newly contracted Local Growth Fund projects, as set out in section 1.
- 2) Notes the current position in relation to the Getting Building Fund Programme, as set out in section 2.1 and Appendix 1.
- 3) Notes the Written Resolution decision on the Integrated Construction Wetlands project, as set out in section 2.2.
- 4) Notes the Written Resolution decision on the Stronger Communities project, as set out in section 2.3.

Main points

1. Local Growth Fund

At the 7 September 2021 Emergency LEP Board Meeting members approved the reinvestment of returned Local Growth Funds against the following projects.

Current Position Returned Local Growth Fund Projects 2021/22				
Project Name	Organisation	Total LGF Awarded	LGF Claims Received to Date	Balance Of LGF to claim (%)
Stronger Communities - Station Quarter Site Acquisition	Telford & Wrekin Council	£ 685,950	£ 685,950	0
Hereford Enterprise Zone Infrastructure	Herefordshire Council	£ 675,000	£ 355,313	48
Oswestry Infrastructure Works	Shropshire Council	£ 711,200	£ -	100
Automotive Centre	Shrewsbury Colleges Group	£ 116,250	£ 86,036	26
Bishops Castle Workspace	Shropshire Council	£ 61,600	£ -	100
Capitalisation	Marches LEP	£ 50,000	£ -	100

Table 1 – Current Position Returned Local Growth Fund Projects 2021/22

All projects listed in table 1 (with the exception of the Capitalisation budget) have been contracted, with claims received on a monthly basis. In addition to the claim process the LEP has met with all project promoters, who have confirmed they will be able to meet their 2021/22 Financial Year (FY) contractual spend targets with the majority of costs profiles in Quarter 4.

The following three LGF projects utilised Freedoms and Flexibilities* (F&F) last FY to enable the LEP to meet its outturn target for 2020/21 FY:

- Connecting Shropshire - utilised £319,011 F&F in 2020/21 FY. On 4 January 2022 the Project confirmed via email the F&F value would be claimed in Quarter 4 2021/22. This would ensure the F&F values are offset within the permitted funding period of 2021/22 Financial Year.
- Primary Care Centre at the Tannery (Phase 2) – utilised £11,502 F&F in 2020/21 FY. On 17 January 2022 the project confirmed via the F&F value relates to a final retention payment being paid, which will be claimed in Quarter 4 2021/22.
- HEZ Infrastructure and Building Investment - utilised £500,000 F&F in 2020/21. The LEP has approved a claim of £500,000 to offset the F&F amount.

**Freedoms & Flexibilities – a process enabling Local Authorities to manage spend between years in the scenario where a project cannot spend all of its annual allocation.*

- **Recommendation – The LEP Board notes the current position in relation to the 2021/22 Returned Local Growth Fund Projects.**

2. Getting Building Fund

2.1 Getting Building Fund Update

1 January – 31 March 2022 represents the final quarter for project expenditure in respect to the LEP's Getting Building Fund Programme (GBF). As reported at the 30 November 2021 LEP Board meeting the low level of spend attributed to Quarters 1 & 2 were anticipated based on projects financial profiles. The LEP is currently in the process of reconciling Quarter 3 claims, which will be reported to Government on 25 February 2022 – Appendix 1 provides an overview of the current programme spend position.

To mitigate underspend risk the LEP team is conducting monthly finance meetings with all projects, understanding the reasons behind their current spend position, receiving assurances that spend allocations for 2021/22 will be met.

As previously reported three projects have confirmed they are unable to achieve their GBF spend allocation by 31 March 2022:

- Hereford City Centre Improvement Project (Funding Agreement varied to allow spend in 2022/23 Financial Year, as reported on 30 November LEP Board meeting).
- Integrated Construction Wetlands (Revised spend profile into 2022/23 agreed via Written Resolution, please see section 2.2)
- Stronger Communities (Revised spend profile into 2022/23 agreed via Written Resolution, please see section 2.3)

In each case the LEP has been able to proactively manage risk relating to underspend by utilising its Accountable Body in relation to Freedoms & Flexibilities, enabling financial profiles to be extended into 2022/23 FY. All other projects have confirmed they are able to spend their grant allocations by 31 March 2022.

- **Recommendation – The LEP Board notes the current position in relation to the Getting Building Fund Programme.**

2.2 Integrated Construction Wetlands – Written Resolution Decision

On 23 December 2021 a Written Resolution paper was circulated to LEP Board members for approval in relation to a revised proposal for the Integrated Construction Wetlands (ICW) project.

Following a vote LEP Board Members voted to approve (12 in favour, 1 Conflict of Interest and 2 No responses) the recommendations set out within the paper.

The recommendations were:

- To not approve the revised ICW proposal presented at the 16 December 2021 PRMC meeting,
- To approve the project proceeds with the Delegated Approval decision, reflected within the Draft Funding Agreement Variation – circulated on 2 December 2021 which includes:
 - GBF Grant 2021/22 FY - £377,372 of GBF funds are spent by 31 March 2022. Should the spend profile of £377,372 not be achieved in 2021/22 FY the balance of GBF grant will be reallocated.
 - GBF Grant 2022/23 FY – Subject to the £377,372 being spent in 2021/22, the project has a GBF allocation of £622,628 to be spent by October 2022. Should the £622,628 not be spent by October 2022 the balance of GBF grant will be reallocated.
 - Outputs – The project achieves 1,385 houses unlocked, as approved by both the LEP and Government as part of the overall Marches GBF bid.

The LEP team are currently working with Herefordshire Council to finalise the Variation to the Funding Agreement, ensuring it is signed-off ahead of the LEP's Annual Performance Review with Government on 26 January 2022. A verbal update on progress will be provided at the 25 January 2022 LEP Board meeting.

- ***Recommendation – The LEP Board notes the Written Resolution decision on the Integrated Construction Wetlands project.***

2.3 Stronger Communities – Written Resolution Decision

A Written Resolution paper was sent to LEP Board members (7 January 2022) for the Stronger Communities (New College, Wellington and surrounding site with Wrekin Housing Group) Project.

Following a vote LEP Board Members voted to approve (11 in favour, 2 Conflict of Interest and 2 No responses) the recommendations set out within the paper.

The recommendation was to approve, the re-profiling of £550k of expenditure up to Quarter 4 2022/23 FY for the Stronger Communities Project.

The LEP team are currently working with Telford & Wrekin Council to finalise the Variation to the Funding Agreement, ensuring it is signed-off ahead of the LEP's Annual Performance Review with Government on 26 January 2022. A verbal update on progress will be provided at the 25 January 2022 LEP Board meeting.

- ***Recommendation – The LEP Board notes the Written Resolution decision on the Stronger Communities project.***

Financial implications:

- The LEP needs to accurately monitor spend and outputs, ensuring these do not impact negatively on performance. Should this happen, it may result in the loss of grant to the Marches through future grant allocations.
- The Freedoms & Flexibilities will be managed by the LEP's Accountable Body, with grant claimed quarterly in arrears.

Legal implications:

- None

Risks, opportunities, and impacts:

- Timescales of project development and delivery need to be carefully managed, including ensuring that adequate resources are in place within the LEP and its Accountable Body to achieve these.
- The grant element of the Getting Building Fund programme closes on 31 March 2022. Extending the spend profile into 2022/23 Financial Year may cause the LEP reputational risk in relation to delivery.

Equality implications:

- None

Additional information:

- [Appendix 1 – GBF Programme Overview](#)

Report Author: Nick Alamanos, MLEP Programme Manager

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Meeting date:	25 January 2022				
Agenda Item:	9				
Item Subject:	The Marches Careers Hub				
For:	Discussion		Decision		Information X

Purpose of the Paper:

To provide the Marches LEP Board with an update on the Marches Careers Hub and outline options for revisions to the project delivery model in the event of a project extension being received.

Summary of Recommendations:

That the Board notes:

1. The current position of the Marches Careers Hub project;
2. Alternative delivery options to be considered dependent on the outcome of the LEP Review and an extension to the CEC funding post August 2022 being awarded.

Main points

Since 2016, the Marches LEP has been contracted to deliver The Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) funded activities locally to enable business and school engagement which drives the effectiveness and impact of careers education. To this end, Enterprise Co-ordinators have been employed by each of the three local authority areas to work directly with schools' senior leaders and support them with implementing career guidance good practice. These posts are 50% funded by CEC and 50% match funded by the local authority.

In September 2020, the Marches LEP secured additional funding to develop the Marches Careers Hub. This aligned with the CEC's new approaches to delivery where Careers Hubs are deemed to be the "bedrock for future provision" due to them delivering accelerated levels of progress and deeper impact. Careers Hub funding was secured on the basis that the Marches LEP provided 50% funding towards an additional Enterprise Coordinator post based within the LEP team. In return, this additional LEP investment would secure a fully funded Hub Lead post (LEP based) plus an operational budget of approx. £50k for local project work to meet the CEC's aims. In line with this agreement, the Hub Lead post was filled in November 2020 through open recruitment and the additional (LEP based) Enterprise Co-ordinator post was filled in May 2021.

The Hub Lead developed a delivery plan to guide Marches Careers Hub activity planning and the Marches Careers Hub was formally launched on 28 April 2021 via a live [on-line event](#) attended by over 160 delegates. The launch featured television presenter and author, Radzi Chinyanganya, and brought together employers, schools, colleges and Enterprise Co-ordinators from across the Marches. Since then, the Hub has led a programme of virtual events with Careers Leaders based in schools and colleges, designed and delivered a virtual careers fair attended by 600 young people, created a network of Cornerstone Employers to champion the project within the business community and recruited additional business volunteers to act as Enterprise Advisers, working strategically with the senior leadership teams of schools and colleges. This central Hub activity adds value to the work that the Enterprise Co-ordinators complete with their caseload of Hub schools and colleges.

Since inception, there have been and remain delivery challenges which are exacerbated by the project delivery structure. A new grant offer letter issued by CEC to cover the period September 2021 to August 2022 was predicated on the basis that improvements in performance are achieved. To this end, a strategic plan has been drafted to shape delivery priorities and a new strategic delivery framework has been put in place to improve delivery and consistency across the Marches area. This framework clarifies the operational decision making processes and

drives collaboration, cohesion and improvement across the team. The CEC continues to proactively assist the Marches team with this through the identification of good practice from other areas which can be applied locally to raise standards.

The Marches Careers Hub is currently under-resourced. The Hub Lead post has been vacant since October 2021 due to the postholder securing another job. This vacancy has been covered by Kathryn Jones, Partnership Manager, supported by Gary Blackburn, Project Support Officer, while a new Careers Hub Lead has been recruited by the Marches LEP. In addition, there are also currently vacant Enterprise Co-ordinator posts in Shropshire (part time) and Telford & Wrekin – this lack of resource is constraining delivery, hampering the achievement of contracted targets and limiting opportunities to develop local Hub-wide initiatives.

The latest performance report highlights that, in spite of the resource challenges, the Marches Careers Hub is making progress (based on national performance measures where the Marches has increased from 3.7 benchmarks to 4.3 against a target of 5). The performance measures also demonstrate, however, that delivery is not consistent across the three local authority areas and the current operational structure limits the opportunity to flex resources to meet project needs and maximise impact.

The new Hub Lead, due to be in post by the end of January 2022, will be supported by the CEC and the LEP team to drive consistency and build performance to maximise the impact of the project within the current contract period to the end of August 2022.

Recommendation 1 - that Board members note the current position of the project

In order to improve performance, it is proposed that the current project delivery structure should be reviewed. The newly implemented strategic delivery framework is already an important step forward here. However, it remains to be seen if this will provide the necessary level of impact and flexibility needed. The employment of Enterprise Co-ordinators by the three local authorities limits the Marches LEP (the contract holder) in implementing new ways of working and in being agile in meeting the needs of the project. Alternative options (successfully implemented by other Careers Hubs) could include:

- Contracting out all provision to one managing agency with responsibility for delivery, financial control, project management and the employment of all project staff;
- Bringing all activity within the LEP team, including the employment of all Enterprise Co-ordinators. This would enable resources to be managed more effectively to meet project objectives.

Either of these options would limit risk for the LEP as contract holder by providing a mechanism which would ensure that:

- The project is implemented consistently across the Marches geography;
- Staff resources are focussed on priority actions including effective cross-local authority working;
- The development and delivery of local Hub projects could be appropriately resourced - this is currently relying disproportionately on the LEP team.

Consideration would need to be given to the match funding requirements under the project for either option, the impact on current staff members, the importance of maintaining effective relationships with local authority partners and the need to maintain alignment with other local careers education related projects delivered across the Marches.

Recommendation 2 – that the Board notes potential alternative delivery options for the project that may be considered by the CEO and Partnership Manager. These are dependent on the outcome of the LEP Review and confirmation of CEC funding and priorities post 31 August 2022.

Financial implications:

- The current grant offer letter between the Marches LEP and CEC is in place until 31 August 2022 and confirms £216,600 of funding for staffing and local project activities which meet the national CEC agenda. This is supplemented by match funding totalling £102,000 provided by the Marches LEP and 3 local authorities.
- The current funding (1 September 2021 – 31 August 2022) was allocated by the CEC on the basis that the LEP would drive improvements in delivery.
- Alternative delivery options would require the local authorities' continued commitment to providing match funding at current levels or the Marches LEP to identify alternative sources of match funding of approx. £102,000 pa.

Legal implications:

- Current project obligations are confirmed within grant funding agreements which are in place with the 3 local authorities, these mirror obligations that are in the CEC's agreement with the Marches LEP.
- Staff within the LEP and those within the local authorities funded under the project are on fixed term contracts in line with currently agreed project funding.
- A move to either of the alternative delivery options would necessitate consideration of and compliance with TUPE obligations for current staff members.
- In the event of all activity being brought in house there would be additional HR responsibilities, including potential redundancy liability, for the Marches LEP.

Risks, opportunities and impacts:

- The current model, based on the new strategic delivery framework, is operating within a short term funding arrangement which makes the recruitment and retention of staff challenging. This resource position presents risks to the successful implementation of the project.
- Changes to the delivery model (either potential option) could:
 - risk the availability of match funding provided by local authority partners;
 - damage the relationship with local authority partners;
 - risk the stability of current staffing arrangements, potentially exacerbating the current resource challenges;
 - provide opportunities for a more consistent response across the Marches and a more flexible delivery model;
 - limit risk to the Marches LEP as contract holder by directing funded resources on meeting project obligations to the satisfaction of the funders.
- The importance of careers education and the role of CEC funded support are explicitly referenced in the Skills and Post 16 Education Bill. This reinforces the importance of

successful project delivery in order for the Marches to position itself to access future funding opportunities for the benefit of the local area.

- Aside from the CEC contract obligations, the Marches Career Hub project contributes directly to objectives within the Marches Strategic Economic Plan, the Marches Economic Recovery Plan and the Marches Local Skills Report and Action Plan.

Equality implications:

The Marches Careers Hub is currently the LEP's only funded project to directly promote the social mobility agenda by supporting young people in finding their best next step.

Report Author:

Kathryn Jones, Marches LEP Partnership Manager, kathryn.jones@marcheslep.org.uk

Background papers/documents:

End