

**Minutes of the Marches LEP Ltd Board Meeting
28 June 2022 at 3.30pm at Ludlow Racecourse
(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 (part of meeting)
Frank Myers MBE	FM	Herefordshire Business Board Chair
Will Westley	WW	Telford Business Board Chair
Cllr Ellie Chowns	EC	Cabinet Member for Environment & Economy, Herefordshire Council
Cllr Dean Carroll	DC	Portfolio Holder for Physical Infrastructure, Shropshire Council
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 (via link)
Ross Cook	RC	Director for Economy and Environment, 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
Alex Collins	AC	Deputy Area Lead, Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire, Cities & Local Growth Unit, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
Rachel Laver	RL	Chief Executive, Marches LEP
Kathryn Jones	KJ	Head of Partnerships & Strategy, Marches LEP
Nick Alamanos	NA	Head of Programmes, Marches LEP
Ennis Vingoe	EV	Executive Assistant, Marches LEP
Jo Grivell	GJ	Office Administrator, Marches LEP

ITEM		ACTION
1.	<p>Welcome</p> <p>1. Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest MT thanked everyone for attending the meeting. Apologies were received from Cllr David Hitchiner; Cllr Lee Carter, Cllr Ed Potter, Beth Heath, Sara Williams, Paul Kalinauckas; Andrew Manning Cox; Christine Snell and Graham Guest. Cllr Ellie Chowns was attending the meeting in Cllr Hitchiner's stead and Cllr Dean Carroll was attending the meeting in Cllr Potter's stead. 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 every meeting. The following declarations of interest were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MT declared an interest in Item 2 – Governance – Chair tenure. 	
2.	<p>Governance</p> <p>2.1. Tenure of the Chair <i>MT left the meeting at 3.55pm.</i></p>	

	<p>SR informed the Board that there had not been a great deal of interest so far in the role of Chair which was currently out for advert. The deadline for applications is 1 July 2022. DC said it was vital to have a backup plan in place should there be no suitable applicants. MT will have served three years at the end of September 2022 and had previously indicated that she would like to step down no later than the end of March 2023. However, she has since kindly offered to stay for an additional period of time until a suitable candidate for chair was found.</p> <p>Following discussion, it was proposed that MT be appointed for another three-year period with the option (as ever) for MT to give notice to step down during this time. In the meantime, the LEP would continue the search process for a successor and would look to use a recruitment firm if the current recruitment was unsuccessful. Everyone was asked to use their networks to promote the opportunities.</p> <p><i>The Board approved MT's appointment as Chair for another three-year term (unanimous).</i></p> <p><i>MT re-joined the meeting at 3.41pm.</i></p> <p>2.2 Telford & Wrekin Council Directors Cllr Shaun Davies, Leader of Telford & Wrekin Council had given notice of his resignation as a director of Marches LEP, due to increased work commitments following his recent election as Senior Vice Chair of the Local Government Association. Cllr Davies had proposed that Cllr Lee Carter, the current Alternate Director for Telford & Wrekin Council was appointed as the lead Director and Cllr Richard Overton, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing, Enforcement and Transport was appointed as the Alternate Director. Cllr Overton had consented to the appointment.</p> <p>The relevant appointment documentation, in accordance with the Articles of Association sections 20 and 23 had been signed by Cllr Carter and Cllr Overton.</p> <p><i>The Board confirmed the appointment of Cllr Carter as a public sector director of Marches LEP Ltd and the appointment of Cllr Overton as an alternate director of Marches LEP Ltd (unanimous).</i></p> <p><i>2.3 The Board noted that the Articles of Association would be updated to reflect required amendments.</i></p>	<p>All</p> <p>EV</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Minutes of The Marches LEP Ltd Board meeting on 26 April 2022 The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 April 2022 were approved by those members present at the meeting and would be signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record of the meeting.</p> <p>Matters Arising The meeting was suspended at 5.13pm for a confidential discussion and except for RL and JW, all non-Board Members left the meeting at this point. The meeting re-convened at 5.20pm.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>LEP Chair and CEO Report MT told the Board that she and RL had attended the LEP Network Chair and CEO's meeting yesterday which was also attended by a number of government ministers. It was made clear at the meeting that private sector led LEPs such as the Marches LEP, who lie outside mayoral authorities, must be working in collaboration with LAs</p>	

	<p>and had a major role in continuing to work with businesses, 'bringing them to the table' at the pan regional level.</p> <p>George Freeman MP – Minister for Science & Innovation extended his thanks particularly to LEP staff and private sector board members for all their work during the recent uncertain times.</p> <p>Cyber clusters and agri-tech were highlighted but discussion did not include the significant contribution of organisations in the Marches to these areas. MT had been asked to convene a meeting between rural LEPs across the country.</p> <p>Lobbying by the Marches MPs would be beneficial to improve awareness of the Marches contribution.</p> <p>Meetings would be organised with Marches MPs in due course.</p> <p>RL informed the Board that the LEP had been approached to look at hosting the local Business Environment Network, which is currently funded through a subscription model. This would need to be carefully researched to see whether the subscription model is something that would be extended. A paper will be brought to the September board meeting.</p> <p>RL drew members' attention to the section in the report on cash flow. The LEP had received informal confirmation yesterday that Treasury had approved core funding for LEPs with an offer letter expected in early July. The LEP required early notification of confirmation of funding for 2023/24 as it continued to run at a loss and could not 'bankroll' projects into the next financial year.</p> <p>SR noted that one of the major strengths of the LEP lay in productive working with LA partners. A wide-ranging discussion took place about the services the LEP could provide, and comments made at the LEP Network meeting about Shared Prosperity Fund allocations and bidding for Levelling Up Funds.</p>	<p>RL</p> <p>RL</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Board Member Recruitment</p> <p>RL reported that 8 expressions of interest had been received so far for the Board member vacancies, some with good commercial experience. The closing date is 1 July 2022.</p> <p>Board members were asked to let EV know their availability to form the shortlisting panel on 11 July 2022; and interview panel on 18 July or 21 July, or potentially both.</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Getting Building Fund and Local Growth Fund Update</p> <p>NA gave his final update to the Board prior to his departure from the Marches LEP. He said that section 1 of Appendix 1 of the Board paper confirmed that all projects funded by the Getting Building Fund had been able to achieve their updated GBF profiles with the exception of those projects which had received Board approval to reprofile expenditure into the 2022/23 FY through Freedoms & Flexibilities (£2.6 million).</p> <p>NA thanked all the LA representatives who had worked to enable the projects to meet their obligations.</p> <p>The Board noted the Quarter 4 2021/22 Financial Year position relating to the Getting Building Fund Programme, as set out in section 1 and Appendix 1 of the paper.</p> <p>NA updated members on the Local Growth Fund projects. He drew members' attention to the NMITE Phase 2 project at Skylon Park. Following Board approval</p>	

	<p>on 11 June 2020, £5.6 million had been transferred directly to Herefordshire Council, in their capacity as the Accountable Body for the NMITE project. An officer from Herefordshire Council had provided an update to the PRMC meeting on 16 June 2022, confirming that the build was scheduled to be completed at the end of July 2022, resulting in all remaining LGF grant being defrayed in the Quarter 2 2022/23 period.</p> <p>The Board noted the current position relating to the NMITE Phase 2 Local Growth Fund project, as set out in section 2.1 of the paper.</p> <p>NA said that the LEP had been successful in ensuring that all LEP contracted LGF expenditure profiled for the 2021/22 FY had been met. LGF was now closed for expenditure purposes, but the LEP would continue to monitor projects in relation to their contractual obligations around achieving outputs and match funding.</p> <p>The Board noted the Quarter 4 2021/22 Financial Year position relating to the Local Growth Fund Programme, as set out in section 2.2 and Appendix 2 of the paper.</p> <p>MT thanked NA on behalf of Board for all his hard work in ensuring that public money had been managed with absolute probity and transparency during his time at the Marches LEP. NA thanked everyone for the support he had received during his time in post.</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p>Delivery Plan 2022/23</p> <p>RL said that work continued on the Marches LEP core activities but that some new opportunities were being explored including putting a bid forward for the Creative Growth Fund.</p> <p>MT said that the LEP needed to demonstrate that it was strengthening its business engagement and it would continue to work with the 3 business boards and business representative organisations on this. Developing a working relationship with the NHS as the biggest employer in the area was also a priority.</p> <p>RL said that businesses were a rich source of data and there should be a two-way flow of information.</p> <p>A paper would be prepared for the September Board meeting looking at business board structure.</p> <p>EC commented that it was good to see the range and number of activities in the Delivery Plan, but it was important to include the expected outputs in order to measure impact/success in 12 months' time. This was discussed and it was agreed that key metrics and prioritisation would be included in the Plan.</p> <p>The 2023/24 Delivery Plan would be developed for November 2022.</p> <p>The Board approved the Marches LEP Delivery Plan for 2022/23 subject to the amendments suggested above (unanimous).</p>	<p>RL</p> <p>RL</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Report from the Performance Risk & Monitoring Committee (PRMC)</p> <p>SR thanked NA on behalf of the PRMC for his contribution and support to the committee during his time in post.</p>	

	<p>SR highlighted the risk in the Strategic Risk Register of not being able to recruit Board members and was pleased to hear that there were currently 8 expressions of interest. Regarding the programme risks there was some concern about the loss of knowledge and skills to the LEP with the departure of NA. PRMC had asked project promoters to come into the PRMC meetings to present at relevant milestone project dates.</p> <p>EC asked whether climate change was included in the risk registers and to what extent they would be updated in response to increases in fuel prices etc. NA said that the Strategic Register looked at the risks to the LEP as an organisation and the Programme Register at the specific programmes, based on the criteria provided by government to assess them against.</p> <p>RL said that it was important to get intelligence from businesses on climate change issues and their energy focus.</p> <p><i>It was agreed that the registers would be reviewed.</i></p> <p><i>The Board noted the outcomes of the last two PRMC meetings (9 May 2022 and 16 June 2022) and the main changes to the Corporate and Programme Risk Registers.</i></p> <p><i>SR left the meeting at 4.57pm</i></p>	<p>RL, T Yair</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p>Low Carbon Fund Delegated Approval</p> <p>RL summarised the paper and said that it was important to have wide representation from the LEP Board on the sub-group. In addition to MT and GC a further 2 further members were required. WW and FM kindly volunteered to be part of the sub-group.</p> <p><i>The Board gave approval for a Low Carbon Subgroup to be formed to shortlist Expressions of Interest following the call process which would close on 8 July 2022 (unanimous).</i></p>	<p>T Yair</p>
<p>10.</p>	<p>Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)/Levelling Up Fund/Towns Fund updates Herefordshire</p> <p>EC updated members on the activities being undertaken by Herefordshire Council for the following funds:</p> <p><u>UKSPF</u> £7.5m over 3 years. Priorities were being identified around an energy efficiency agenda. The Stakeholder Board had met twice which included a number of LEP members. Stakeholder engagement particularly with businesses had been very successful across the county.</p> <p><u>Levelling Up Fund</u> 3 proposals for the county: <i>Transport Proposal</i> Focussed on Hereford City, including a transport hub and 2 active travel projects. <i>North Herefordshire Constituency</i> Proposal for public realm improvements in Ledbury and Leominster. The range of projects eligible for this funding was severely constrained by the criteria of the funding. <i>South Herefordshire Constituency</i> Proposal for the development of Ross Enterprise Park.</p>	

Towns Fund

£22.4 million with 15 projects being put forward with a core focus on a 'Green and Fairer City'. Areas include electric buses, creative, digital, skills, sports facilities, plus a large museum transformation project and moving the library. Business cases had been submitted.

Shropshire

MB gave an update on Shropshire Council activities in relation to the funds:

UKSPF

£12.25 million awarded over 3 years. The council had brought in extra consultants to assist in the development of the bid. Engagement had taken place with the skills sector, colleges and third sector. Shropshire Council had also been refreshing its economic strategy and this feeds into the bids because much of the required evidence had already been sourced through stakeholder engagement.

Different portfolios within this fund were being looked at within this fund and business support was likely to be the biggest area.

Levelling Up Fund

The round one submissions had not been successful and these were being resubmitted, but some of the criteria had changed. There would be 4 bids:

Riverside Development and core of Shrewsbury;

Oswestry Innovation Park;

Craven Arms business park/employment space and freeing up brownfield land within the town. There would be housing development including a bridge across the A49 and the railway.

Public transport – helping support the viability of rural bus services through the Shropshire Connect Strategy; shifting to an on-demand service.

Telford & Wrekin

KK presented an update on the activities being undertaken by Telford & Wrekin Council:

UKSPF Investment Plan

Allocation of £5.8million over 3 years with an anticipated focus on economy and employment complimenting the Council's existing 'Safer, Stronger Communities Programme'.

Levelling Up Fund

Telford Constituency Bid

Two inter-related projects: remodelling and expansion of The Place Theatre (Oakengates) to deliver a broader cultural programme and greater community and educational activity; and expansion of Telford's sixth form offer to create an 'academic campus' within Telford Station Quarter alongside the digital skills and enterprise hub being funded via Towns Funding.

Wrekin Constituency Bid

To re-model and regenerate Wellington Town Centre including the historic market.

Transport Bid – cross-constituency

Telford & Wrekin Sustainable Transport Package in 3 parts: Silkin Way Investment Plan; local cycling and walking routes; and bus improvements including electric buses.

Towns Fund

£22.3 million had been awarded in June 2021 with 3 projects being put forward: Station Quarter; Oakengates Theatre Quarter; and Wellington

	<p>Conservation Area. A decision by DLUHC was anticipated in August/September 2022 with all projects to be delivered by March 2025.</p> <p>MT thanked EC, MB, and KK for their updates.</p>	
11.	<p>Marches Careers Hub Update</p> <p>KJ introduced the information paper. Part 1 was an update against KPIs and it was noted that performance had improved significantly during the period. It was anticipated that new contract documentation for the next 12 months would be forthcoming in the next week or so. Business volunteers (Enterprise Advisers) to work with schools continued to be a key area of work and it was hoped that some of those expressing an interest in the LEP Board member roles may be interested in becoming advisers.</p> <p>Part 2 was an update on the review of the delivery model. Following a detailed options analysis being carried out the decision had been taken to retain the current model.</p> <p><i>The Board noted the update, the improvement in delivery and the next steps for the Marches Careers Hub.</i></p> <p><i>MT asked if information on the geographical areas where Enterprise Advisers were still required could be passed to Board members to aid with potential recruitment; and if the members could also be reminded of the performance benchmarks.</i></p> <p>RL congratulated KJ, Andriané Usherwood-Brown, David Taylor and staff in the LA teams on the massively improved figures over the past 6 months.</p>	KJ
12.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>Re-election of Board members</p> <p>RL informed the Board that Catherine Baxter and Christine Snell had completed their initial 2-year tenure on the Board.</p> <p><i>Members present agreed that CB and CS would be re-elected as Private Sector Directors (unanimous).</i></p> <p><i>Post meeting note – all Board members would be contacted and asked to confirm their response by correspondence.</i></p> <p>The meeting closed at 5:44 pm</p>	EV
<p>Next Meeting: 27 September 2022 at Ludlow Racecourse from 3.30pm to 5.30pm</p>		

Signed (electronically):

Mandy Thorn MBE DL, Chair Marches LEP

Date: 27 September 2022