

**Minutes of the Marches LEP Ltd Board Meeting
27 September 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
Frank Myers MBE	FM	Herefordshire Business Board Chair
Andrew Manning Cox	AMC	Hereford Enterprise Zone Chair
Cllr David Hitchiner	DH	Leader, Herefordshire Council
Cllr Lezley Picton	LP	Leader, Shropshire Council
Cllr Lee Carter	LC	Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services, Regeneration and the High Street, Telford & Wrekin Council
Gordon Coppock	GC	Energy and Net Zero Champion
Graham Guest	GG	Skills Advisory Panel Chair; Skills Champion; Chief Executive and Principal of Telford College
Paul Kalinauckas	PK	Access to Finance Champion
Christine Snell	CS	Business Partner, AJ & CI Snell
Catherine Baxter	CB	Higher Education Champion; University Secretary, Harper Adams University

In Attendance:

James Walton	JW	Section 151 Officer, Shropshire Council (via link)
Roger Allonby	RA	Acting Service Director for Economy, Herefordshire Council
Mark Barrow	MB	Executive Director for Place, Shropshire Council
Katherine Kynaston	KK	Director Housing Economy & Infrastructure, Telford & Wrekin Council
Liam Askins	LA	Head of 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
Rachel Laver	RL	Chief Executive, Marches LEP
Kathryn Jones	KJ	Head of Partnerships & Strategy, Marches LEP
Tim Yair	TY	Regional Senior Net Zero Projects Officer, Midlands Net Zero Hub
Ennis Vingoe	EV	Executive Assistant, Marches LEP
Jo Grivell	GJ	Office Administrator, Marches LEP

Observers:

Alex Green	AG	Director Radfield Homecare (part of meeting)
Clare Fenton	CF	Director Fenton Partners & Veritherm (part of meeting)

ITEM		ACTION
1.	<p>Welcome 1. Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest MT thanked everyone for attending the meeting. Apologies were received from Sara Williams, Will Westley and Cllr Ed Potter. Cllr Lezley Picton attended the meeting in Cllr Potter's stead. MT welcomed Alex Green and Clare Fenton to their first meeting of the Board (as observers) and also welcomed Liam Askins to his first meeting. 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"> • CF, LC, DH and LP for Item 9 – Marches Energy Fund. <p>MT informed the Board that she had been appointed to the Harper Adams University Development Trust. FM and DH said that they had been appointed as directors of Herefordshire County BID.</p>	
	<p>Part A – Public Session</p>	
<p>2.</p>	<p>Governance</p> <p>1. Board Member Appointments A successful round of interviews to appoint new Board members had been held on 18 August 2022. Thanks were expressed to the Chair and Deputy Chair, Frank Myers MBE and Cllr Ed Potter for their contribution as members of the interview panel.</p> <p>MT introduced Clare Fenton from Herefordshire and Alex Green from Shropshire who were the successful candidates and had accepted roles as members of the Marches LEP Board, subject to Board approval. They had also consented to their appointment as directors.</p> <p><i>In accordance with the Articles of Association section 20, the Board confirmed the appointment of Clare Fenton and Alex Green as directors of Marches LEP Ltd and members of the Board (unanimous).</i></p> <p>The relevant documentation would be filed with Companies House.</p> <p>2. Recruitment of Marches LEP Chair An update had been provided in the LEP Chair and CEO Report on Item 4 on the agenda.</p> <p>3a. Re-election of Christine Snell and Catherine Baxter <i>The Board noted that the re-election of Catherine Baxter and Christine Snell to the Marches LEP Board for a further 2-year tenure to July 2024, had been approved by correspondence.</i></p> <p>3b. Re-election of Paul Kalinauckas <i>Members of the Board approved the re-election of Paul Kalinauckas to the Marches LEP Board until May 2024 (unanimous).</i></p> <p>4. Resignation of Beth Heath as of 12 September 2022 Beth Heath had recently resigned as the Chair of Shropshire Business Board and as a member of the Marches LEP Board.</p> <p>MT said that Shropshire Business Board had merged into the Shropshire Economic Taskforce. The Shropshire Business Board would therefore cease and there would no longer be a representative on the Marches LEP Board. Proposals on how the Marches LEP would continue to engage with Shropshire businesses were covered separately in the Chair and CEO report.</p>	<p>EV</p>

	<p><i>The Board noted that Beth Heath had resigned as Chair of the Shropshire Business Board and therefore as a member of the Marches LEP Board and a director of Marches LEP Ltd.</i></p> <p>The necessary documentation had been filed with Companies House.</p> <p>CB informed the Board that she would be leaving Harper Adams University in September 2023 and stepping down from the Marches LEP Board and the HE Group. MT said that discussions on succession to the HE representative role on the Board would take place in early Spring 2023 with a view to appointing (with a period of handover) in the Summer. FM raised his concerns on waiting until the Spring to start this process but CB and the Chair felt that as the HE representation was decided through the HE Group the timing and process should be discussed in that forum first.</p>	
<p>3.</p>	<p>Minutes of The Marches LEP Ltd Board meeting on 28 June 2022 The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 June 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>4.</p>	<p>LEP Chair and CEO Report</p> <p><i>The Board noted the content of the report.</i></p> <p>Growth Hub MT highlighted some areas of the report and noted that Growth Hub funding had been reduced by 50% at a time when support for businesses was even more critical. RL said that there had been a cost-saving internal restructure which enabled more funding to go into direct delivery of the programme and less into the central administration.</p> <p>Business Boards and Marches Business Support Steering Group MT reiterated that the Shropshire Business Board had merged with the Shropshire Economic Task Force and explained the role of the Marches Business Support Steering Group (BSSG). MT commented that it seemed sensible to use the Group to continue to support LEP connections into businesses, working with the remaining business boards.</p> <p>There was some discussion regarding the proposal to widen the scope of the Business Support Steering Group to draw together Marches wide business information and be the main communication channel, in conjunction with the remaining business boards, for feeding information back to businesses.</p> <p>It was agreed that the Herefordshire and Telford Business Board Chairs, the Chair of MBSSG and RL would meet to discuss the proposal, the scope and membership of the MBSSG and any implication for LEP Board membership. An update and revised proposal would be presented at the next Board meeting.</p> <p>Employer Representative Body A discussion then took place regarding the emerging Employer Representative Body and how it would consult with businesses. The delivery plan proposal from Shropshire Chamber of Commerce, which includes how businesses would be</p>	<p>RL</p>

	<p>engaged and what sectors/themes were being put forward was due to be submitted to the Department for Education on 3 October 2022</p> <p>MB said that the Economic Task Force was providing intelligence into Shropshire Chamber and KK was due to meet with the Chamber next week.</p> <p>The LEP would request a draft copy of the proposal prior to submission. <i>Post Meeting note – the proposal was received from Shropshire Chamber of Commerce following the Board meeting on 27 September 2022 and feedback on its content sought.</i></p> <p>Scheme of Delegation MT explained the proposal that the Board increases the amount the Marches LEP CEO can approve on Shropshire Council’s finance system to £100k per month, for salaries only. FM asked why, when the Board had approved the salary budget, there was the need to change the scheme of delegation. JW explained that the finance system has two authorisation levels at £30k and £100k. The purchase order for the salary costs (which is circa £49k per month) has to be separated into smaller purchase orders each time, due to the current CEO approved delegation on the finance system being £30k. Approval of the proposal would allow streamlining of the current process.</p> <p><i>Following some discussion, the Board approved the increase in the amount the Marches LEP CEO can approve on the Council’s finance system to £100k per month, for salaries only within the agreed operating budget. (11 for: 1 against).</i> RL to action.</p>	RL
5.	<p>Report from the Performance Risk & Monitoring Committee meeting held on 25 August 2022 SR described the function of the PRMC and noted that there were comprehensive risk registers in place. Three project presentations were given at the last meeting and some robust discussions took place with project sponsors regarding progress made with delivery. SR thanked PRMC members and project sponsors for their collaborative working.</p> <p><i>The Board noted the outcomes of the PRMC meeting held on 25 August 2022.</i></p> <p>SR proposed that any new Marches LEP Board members should join the PRMC for a period of time.</p> <p><i>The Board approved the proposal that that new Marches LEP Board members would serve for a period of time on the PRMC (unanimous).</i></p>	
6.	<p>Hereford City Centre Improvements (HCCI) MT welcomed Sue White, Neil Batt and Mark Averill (joining online) from Herefordshire Council to the meeting to deliver a presentation on the HCCI project. The main points covered in the presentation were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 16 elements of HCCI approved in the deed of variation in December 2021 • Green-roof cycle shelters in place • Market and Event infrastructure • CCTV – 2 phase installation • Installation of planters completed 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Town Minor Works central and commercial area completed and Widemarsh Street commencing early 2023 • St Owen’s Street – cycle scheme much larger than originally anticipated and improving safety for pedestrians • City Trees – RA would share environmental performance data with the Board as it became available and share details of the scheme with Shropshire Council. • Public art strategy commenced • Hostile Vehicle Mitigation – softer design measures to limit speed • City Greening – the number of sites had been refined • Façade grants – introduce a higher intervention rate if necessary and work with Hereford BID to support businesses. RA would contact KK to discuss similar measures being undertaken in Telford & Wrekin Council and the learning from this. • Cathedral and River Wye Quarter – creating a sense of place with less emphasis on vehicular access. • City Centre Masterplan (December 2022) would include the car parking issues in the city. <p>S White said that the re-profiling had been re-adjusted following the discussions at the PRMC meeting. Both MT and SR noted that the project should have been completed 17 months ago under the terms of the original bid programme. However, it was good to see the project now moving at pace.</p> <p>FM expressed concern that, when the City Centre Improvement Grant was applied for and awarded, there was insufficient detail given about the proposed expenditure. He had specifically checked with Nick Alamanos and was unable to see that many of the items now purchased were identified at the time. With the benefit of hindsight, he felt that the Board should have been better sighted on the planned expenditure and should learn this lesson for any future applications. As a result of this information shortfall, he asked to see a cost benefit analysis supporting the purchases proposed. In particular, he asked for this specific information on City Trees, Green Roof Cycle shelters and the ST Owens Street project. It was agreed by the Herefordshire Council representatives that this information would be made available.</p> <p>Herefordshire Council would liaise directly with FM regarding providing a cost-benefit analysis of the measures in the project for Herefordshire Business Board.</p> <p>It was confirmed that Herefordshire Council would bear any legal costs associated with the grant variation.</p> <p><i>The Board approved the revised proposals and spend profile for the HCCI project (unanimous).</i></p>	<p>RA</p> <p>RA</p> <p>RA/FM</p> <p>RL</p>
7.	<p>The Business Environment Network</p> <p>RL summarised the proposal to transfer The Business Environment Network (TBEN) from Shropshire Wildlife Trust to the LEP, including the potential limitations of the 2 options, but said that it was an interesting opportunity for the LEP.</p> <p>There was considerable discussion regarding the proposal with some members expressing concern that it would be a diversion of the limited resources currently available in the LEP. There was also some concern over whether the LEP should</p>	

	<p>operate a subscription model. Other members suggested that the area required a strong focus and believed that it was a good fit for the LEP priorities.</p> <p><i>Following further discussion, the Board did not approve the transfer of The Business Environment Network (TBEN) from Shropshire Wildlife Trust to the LEP.</i></p> <p>RL would share the information with LP and would follow up with Shropshire Council and Shropshire Wildlife Trust.</p>	RL
8.	<p>Department for International Trade – Key Account Management Programme 2022/23</p> <p>There were no questions on the paper.</p> <p><i>The Board noted the overall effectiveness of the revised KAM delivery model, introduced for the period 1 April 2022 to 30 September 2022.</i></p> <p><i>The Board approved the recommendation to continue this approach during the extension from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023.</i></p>	
	<p>Part B – Private Session</p>	
9.	<p>Marches LEP Energy Fund <i>CF and AG left the meeting at 5.03pm</i></p> <p>MT noted that there were potential conflicts of interest for Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council because they formed part of one of the bids for the Energy Fund. It was confirmed by LP and LC that they had not been party to the bids before they were submitted, MT reminded the LA members that they would be voting on the proposed beneficiaries as directors of Marches LEP.</p> <p>RL explained that the item was being presented as a Part B item in private session due to the commercial in confidence nature of the information in the business case applications. Following the decision by the Board the successful and unsuccessful applicants would be informed before any press release was issued.</p> <p>MT thanked GC, FM, WW and Gareth Williams, a member of the Marches Energy Group, who formed the assessment panel for their hard work. RL thanked TY for pulling together the summaries of the applications in a very short timeframe.</p> <p>FM added that the due diligence process had been extremely thorough, and a follow-up meeting had been held with one of the projects to clarify some queries from the panel.</p> <p><i>The Board approved the following projects for funding (unanimous):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Marches Network Monitoring</i> to support Community Decarbonisation - project to bring forward plans to install monitors at 250 sub stations which will help release energy capacity on to the network. • <i>Clean Growth Marches</i> - scheme to provide grant towards energy improvements to businesses in conjunction with energy audits, which will build on the success of the Business Efficiency Energy Efficiency Programme (BEEP). • <i>Herefordshire Low Carbon Technology Centre</i> - scheme to develop facility to deliver green skills training. 	

	<p>For Clean Growth Marches it was agreed that for any branding, it would be made clear that it was a Marches LEP area project and that any reference to the administration of it by Worcestershire Council would be minimal.</p> <p>MT confirmed that the Clean Growth Marches grant fund would be widely publicised for businesses to apply and TY said that a number of businesses identified at the Expression of Interest stage would be eligible to apply.</p> <p>RL said that the Marches Network Monitoring and Clean Growth Marches projects were scalable, so if demand was high and results positive, these projects could receive additional funding, subject to further Board approval. Alternatively, the LEP could go out for another, more specific call.</p> <p><i>The Board approved the proposal that the remaining funding was held back while the projects above were delivered, and progress and impact would be reviewed in due course (unanimous).</i></p>	RL
10.	<p>Any Other Business West Midlands Investment Zones</p> <p>MT asked LA (Cities and Local Growth Unit West Midlands) to brief the Board about the proposed Investment Zones mentioned in the recent Fiscal Statement by the new Chancellor. He informed the Board that early conversations had been had with some councils around the country where there may be interest in Investment Zones and apologised to the 3 councils in the Marches, where conversations had not yet taken place. He reassured the Board that the process for selection of investment zones had not yet commenced, and the next stage would be the expression of interest process, to start possibly later this week. Guidance had been published on the .gov website on 24 September 2022: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/investment-zones-in-england/investment-zones-in-england</p> <p>Members expressed their concern to LA that it appeared that the Marches area councils had been excluded. There was huge frustration that the guidance gave the impression that rural/peri-urban areas were not going to be considered because they were not important.</p> <p>LA would take the concerns expressed back to BEIS.</p> <p>AMC outlined the success of Skylon Park, the Hereford Enterprise Zone, and invited LA to visit. RL highlighted that this would be an ideal location for future Ministerial visits.</p> <p>The 3 Marches council representatives and RL would have a follow-up conversation with LA to further discuss opportunities for investment, in light of the announcement.</p> <p>LA confirmed that for any potential “devolution deal” it would not be possible to work across country borders (so any formal work with Welsh counties); but that cross-border collaboration was still encouraged.</p> <p>LA said that it was hoped that there would be further clarity for LEPs very soon on funding and mandates.</p>	LA RL
<p>Next Meeting: 29 November 2022 at Ludlow Assembly Rooms from 3.30pm to 5.30pm</p>		



Signed (electronically):

Mandy Thorn MBE DL, Chair Marches LEP

Date: 29 November 2022