

**Minutes of the Marches LEP Ltd Board Meeting  
29 November 2022 at 3.30pm at Ludlow Assembly Rooms  
(Company Number: 11822614)**

**Present:**

<b>Mandy Thorn MBE DL</b>	MT	Chair, Marches LEP
<b>Sonia Roberts</b>	SR	Deputy Chair Marches LEP; Equality & Diversity Champion; CEO Landau Limited
<b>Frank Myers MBE</b>	FM	Herefordshire Business Board Chair
<b>Will Westley</b>	WW	Telford Business Board Chair
<b>Cllr David Hitchiner</b>	DH	Leader, Herefordshire Council
<b>Cllr Lezley Picton</b>	LP	Leader, Shropshire Council
<b>Cllr Lee Carter</b>	LC	Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services, Regeneration and the High Street, Telford & Wrekin Council (online)
<b>Gordon Coppock</b>	GC	Energy and Net Zero Champion
<b>Graham Guest</b>	GG	Skills Advisory Panel Chair; Skills Champion; Chief Executive and Principal of Telford College
<b>Paul Kalinauckas</b>	PK	Access to Finance Champion
<b>Sara Williams</b>	SW	Marketing Manager - Northern Europe, Protolabs (online)
<b>Catherine Baxter</b>	CB	Higher Education Champion; University Secretary, Harper Adams University
<b>Alex Green</b>	AG	Director Radfield Homecare
<b>Clare Fenton</b>	CF	Director Fenton Partners & Veritherm (joined the meeting at 3.40pm)

**In Attendance:**

<b>Ross Cook</b>	RC	Director for Economy and Environment, Herefordshire Council
<b>Matt Potts</b>	MP	Business Growth & Investment Services Manager, Shropshire Council (part of meeting)
<b>James Dunn</b>	JD	Director Prosperity & Investment, Telford & Wrekin Council
<b>Katherine Kynaston</b>	KK	Director Housing Economy & Infrastructure, Telford & Wrekin Council
<b>Alex Collins</b>	AC	Deputy Area Lead, Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire, Cities & Local Growth Unit (online)
<b>Rachel Laver</b>	RL	Chief Executive, Marches LEP
<b>Kathryn Jones</b>	KJ	Head of Partnerships & Strategy, Marches LEP
<b>Ennis Vingoe</b>	EV	Executive Assistant, Marches LEP
<b>Jo Grivell</b>	GJ	Office Administrator, Marches LEP

<b>ITEM</b>		<b>ACTION</b>
<b>1.</b>	<p><b>Welcome</b></p> <p><b>1. Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest</b> MT thanked everyone for attending the meeting. Apologies were received from Andrew Manning Cox, Christine Snell and James Walton. MT welcomed James Dunn to the meeting from Telford &amp; Wrekin Council. MT noted that the meeting was being recorded to aid the production of the minutes.</p> <p><b>2. Declarations of Interest</b> 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> <p>FM – made a general declaration for inclusion in his Register of Interests as a member of Herefordshire Strategic Growth Board.</p>	

	<p>CB – Item 7a as Harper Adams University potentially involved in elements of the Telford projects to be discussed.  GG – Item 7a as Telford College involved in elements of the Telford projects to be discussed.  LC – Item 7a declared interest as a member of Telford &amp; Wrekin Council.</p> <p><b>Members were reminded that they should regularly review their general Registers of Interest and inform the LEP of any changes.</b></p>	<b>All</b>
<b>2.</b>	<p><b>Governance</b>  SR left the meeting at 3:35pm  <b>1. Appointment of New Chair</b>  The interview for the role of Marches LEP Chair was held on 8 November 2022. Sonia Roberts was the successful candidate and had accepted the role as Chair, subject to Board approval.</p> <p><i><b>The Board confirmed the appointment of Sonia Roberts as Chair of The Marches LEP Ltd from the end of business at this meeting (unanimous).</b></i>  SR re-joined the meeting at 3.38pm</p> <p><b>2. Nomination for Deputy Chair</b>  Due to the role of Deputy Chair now being vacant, in accordance with the Terms of Reference the new Chair would nominate a Board Member to be the new Deputy Chair at the next Board meeting.  <b>SR asked that anyone who was interested in the role to contact her.</b></p> <p><i><b>The Board noted the process for the appointment of a new Deputy Chair.</b></i></p> <p><b>3. Shropshire Council Alternate Director</b>  Cllr Picton had given notice of the appointment of Cllr Dean Carroll, Portfolio Holder for Growth and Regeneration as the Alternate Director for Shropshire Council. Cllr Carroll had consented to the appointment.</p> <p><i><b>The Board confirmed the appointment of Cllr Dean Carroll as an alternate director of The Marches LEP Ltd (unanimous).</b></i></p> <p><b>4. Small Business Champion</b>  RL explained that following a suggestion that a Small Business Champion should be nominated, the LEP had confirmed that the Chair of the Marches Business Support Steering Group (MBSSG) covered that role for the Marches LEP.</p> <p><i><b>The Board agreed that Dave Courteen, Chair of MBSSG would act as the Small Business Champion for the Marches LEP (unanimous).</b></i></p> <p><b>5. Board Member Appointment</b>  RL reminded the Board that previously the Chair of the Shropshire Business Board had had a seat on the LEP Board. As the business board no longer existed it was suggested that the Chair of the MBSSG should have a seat on the Marches LEP Board as the MBSSG had members from businesses and intermediaries across the Marches. The Chair had now also been approved as the Small Business Champion.</p> <p><i><b>The Board agreed that that the Chair of MBSSG (Dave Courteen) be appointed a member of the LEP Board (unanimous).</b></i></p>	<b>All</b>

	<p><b>The relevant documentation for the new directors would be registered at Companies House.</b></p>	EV
3.	<p><b>Minutes of The Marches LEP Ltd Board meeting on 27 September 2022</b> The Minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 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><b>Matters Arising</b> Item 6 - FM said that the information he had helpfully received from Herefordshire Council on the HCCI project was incomplete. <b>RA would be asked to forward the additional information as detailed in the action in the minutes of the previous meeting.</b></p>	RC/RA
4.	<p><b>LEP Chair and CEO Report</b></p> <p><b>Funding</b> AC confirmed that there was still no news from government on LEP core or Growth Hub funding.</p> <p><b>Devolution</b> MT said that there had been discussion at a recent LEP Network Board meeting regarding devolution deals and that no future bespoke deals would be available. DH commented that any deals would also have to go through the usual local government governance procedures including a vote by cabinets, to be approved.</p> <p><b>Transport</b> RL reported that the LEP had appointed Aecom as transport consultants to further the work of the Transport Officer Group and help develop business cases to secure investment for strategic pan-Marches schemes. FM asked about the processes for appointing the consultant and suggested that the Board should have been informed that the tender process was taking place. MT said that the process had been conducted within the delegated authority of the CEO; the link for which is: <a href="#">Marches Local Enterprise Partnership Scheme of Delegation - Marches LEP</a> <b>The consultancy proposal would be shared with the Board for information. GC offered to work with the consultants from a zero-carbon perspective.</b></p> <p><b>PR and Marketing</b> The LEP would be going out to tender for a new contract in the new year to run from April 23 as the existing contract comes to an end at the end of March 23.</p> <p><b>Growth Hubs</b> MT suggested that withdrawing funding for Growth Hubs during the current recession would be foolhardy and work was ongoing nationally and locally to emphasise the importance of the Growth Hub service to businesses.</p> <p><b>Meeting with Dehenna Davison MP, Local Growth Minister in DLUHC</b> MT told members that this meeting had been postponed but the LEP Network had asked MT to attend the rescheduled meeting ex officio, to discuss the impact on rural areas of levelling up.</p>	RL RL

	<p><b>LEP Directors' Liability</b> A discussion took place regarding any ongoing liability for directors should the LEP be wound up. RL would continue to follow up at national level, but the understanding was that the current maximum liability for directors was for £1. <b>RL would check on the current situation, insurance etc and provide a note to members, including a copy of the LEP's existing director insurance policy.</b></p> <p><b>Employer Representative Body (ERB)</b> RL reported that the first meeting of the Marches Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) Board had taken place last week. Members discussed the representation on that board. Currently there was no independent representative from the Shropshire business community on the board. Telford businesses were represented by Richard Partington (AceOn Group) and Herefordshire businesses by Debbie Gittoes (Arctic Circle Ltd). The ERB would distribute a survey to businesses in the near future. <b>RL asked everyone to circulate the information as widely as possible through their networks once the survey link was available.</b></p> <p>KJ told the Board that the Skills Advisory Panel work would continue for this financial year, but would not duplicate ERB work and would support the development of the LSIP. GG had written to Shropshire Chamber of Commerce to ask for confirmation in writing that they had sufficient information from the LEP to inform their role developing the LSIP. The Chamber had confirmed that this was the case. The business board representatives on the Marches LSIP Board were concerned that the LSIP should not just be about collecting data. A discussion took place regarding what sectors would be included in the plan, whether large businesses would be engaged with, the skills gap across the region and that the free skills training for renewable energy etc was not being taken up. GG suggested that everyone should complete the surveys and feed back concerns through the business board representatives on the LSIP Board. Neal Hooper was the new Chair of the LSIP Board. <b>Post meeting action: The LSIP Board list of members would be shared with the Marches LEP Board.</b></p> <p><b>The Board noted the content of the report.</b></p> <p><b>Marches Energy Grant Scheme</b> RL explained that there was very strong demand from businesses in the Marches for this funding stream but because Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) funding had not yet been confirmed to the local authorities (LAs) by government, the programme could not be launched at the start of December, as had been hoped. The 3 LAs were due to provide match funding for the programme. AC said that LAs should hear about SPF funding in the next few days. LC, DH and LP agreed that their councils could not make the commitment to underwrite the programme without SPF confirmation. RL referred members to the Board paper which outlined 3 potential options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Councils underwrite/cashflow their SPF contributions to the project.</li> <li>• The LEP allows the fund to go live and approves up to £100k of the approved £1.575m to be used towards the operating costs including energy audits, up to the end of March 23.</li> <li>• The LEP awards additional funding out of the £500k Energy fund reserve to pay for the operating costs for a set period.</li> </ul>	<p>RL</p> <p>RL, All</p> <p>EV</p>
--	--	------------------------------------

	<p>Members discussed the proposed options. GC said that it was imperative that the fund was launched as soon as possible and proposed that the Board opted for Option 2. PK seconded the proposal.</p> <p><b><i>The Board agreed that Option 2 would be the preferred option and should be actioned (13 For; 1 Abstention)</i></b></p>	RL
5.	<p><b>Report from the Performance Risk &amp; Monitoring Committee meeting held on 7 November 2022</b></p> <p>SR introduced the report and noted that the biggest risk for the LEP was the continued uncertainty over funding. At the PRMC meeting the S151 officer James Walton had confirmed that he was content that risks were being well managed by the Committee and the Board. The Committee provided a continuous review of the risks and their liability to the LEP.</p> <p>SR went through the 5 main risks and said that the LEP had received a Freedom of Information request regarding the Oxon Link Road project, which had been responded to. LP confirmed that Matt Johnson would attend the next PRMC meeting to deliver an update on this project.</p> <p>PK said that it was reassuring that Board members were involved in the regular review of the risks, therefore providing good governance. All new Board members now attended the PRMC. CF commented that, as a new member, as she attended more PRMC meetings, the projects and their history were becoming more familiar. AG concurred.</p> <p>SR thanked RL for her work with project sponsors outside the committee meetings to resolve issues and come up with workable solutions.</p> <p><b>PRMC were now considering how to evaluate the success of programmes.</b></p> <p><b><i>The Board noted the outcomes of the PRMC meeting held on 7 November 2022.</i></b></p>	SR
6.	<p><b>Marches LEP Annual Report 2022</b></p> <p>Members of the Board commented that the electronic format of the report was excellent.</p> <p><b><i>The Board approved the Annual Report.</i></b></p>	RL
7.	<p><b>Telford &amp; Wrekin Council Updates</b></p> <p><b>a. Projects Update</b></p> <p>James Dunn delivered a presentation which gave an update on the following projects:</p> <p>Stronger Communities – Granville scheme; Station Quarter scheme. Getting Building Fund – New College scheme; Glebe Street scheme.</p> <p>JD explained the changes to outputs that were put forward for approval by the Board, following approval by the PRMC. Members discussed the requested output changes.</p> <p><b><i>The Board noted the progress and updates within the report.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>The Board approved the output changes as detailed in the report including:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>reference to New College in the Stronger Communities Grant allocation</i></b></li> <li>• <b><i>para 4 in the report setting out the revised outputs (unanimous).</i></b></li> </ul>	

	<p><b>A contract variation would be required.</b></p> <p><i>The Board noted that public and private match funding associated with the projects would continue to be captured and reported on moving forward to demonstrate value for money.</i></p> <p><b>b. Telford Land Deal Update</b>          JD updated the Board on the scheme and the achievements to date. Members commented that Telford Land Deal was a very successful partnership and the profit share distribution to the Marches LEP since the start of the project had been £0.75 million. Part of this had been used for support to local businesses across the Marches area following the severe flooding in 2020. MT noted that funds from the profit share distribution was for use across the Marches area. MT congratulated Telford &amp; Wrekin Council on the success of the scheme.  <b>The Board noted the outcomes achieved during the 2021/2022 financial year and overall, since the Land Deal commenced in 2015.</b></p>	RL
8.	<p><b>Marches LEP Finances</b>          RL presented information to the Board on the Marches LEP finances including where the funding comes from; core spend; the Key Account Management project; the Careers Hub and Growth Hub projects. It was noted that significant savings had been made in operating costs over the last 12 months but that there would still be a £340k overspend overall this financial year.</p> <p><b>The Board noted the content of the presentation.</b></p>	
9.	<p><b>Strategic Economic Plan – vision and priorities</b>          KJ gave a presentation on the development of an updated Strategic Economic Plan to replace the original plan launched in 2019. The evidence base would also be refreshed.          The plan was being updated in order to respond to the significant economic and societal changes since 2019 including the political and policy landscape. The refreshed plan would also shape the LEP’s external funding strategy.          Members discussed how the SEP would align with the recently updated economic plans in the 3 LAs. LP said that the plans would have similar themes so the LEP could look to where the gaps were and where it could add value or be an enabler. It was proposed that KJ work with the LAs and other relevant partners to ensure that the updated plan aligned with the relevant strategies. RL said that other partners also used the SEP e.g., Marches Nature Partnership, and that strategies such as the Marches Energy Strategy and the Skills Strategy should be aligned with it.          MT remained optimistic that there would still be opportunities for cross-LA boundary funding and the SEP would inform work on this          KJ invited Board members, sub-group members and partners to become involved in the development of the plan and to provide thoughts on the key structure and themes.</p> <p><b>It was agreed that KJ would organise a working group to assist in the development of the SEP.</b></p> <p><b>Everyone was asked to send any comments on the vision statement on p52 of pack to KJ.</b></p> <p><b>The Board noted the content of the report.</b></p>	<p>KJ</p> <p>All</p>

<p><b>10.</b></p>	<p><b>Business Boards/Marches Business Support Steering group (MBSSG)</b>            RL said that a productive meeting had taken place with business board Chairs, the Chair of MBSSG, PK, MT and RL earlier in the month. RL explained the proposals and it was noted that the MBSSG would not duplicate the work of business boards or the Shropshire Economic Task Force.</p> <p>The Board was asked to approve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appointing two additional members to the MBSSG, representing intermediaries such as banks and business advisors.</li> <li>• Appointing a Higher Education representative to the group.</li> <li>• Shaping new initiatives that help address business needs.</li> <li>• Asking businesses that have received support to present to the steering group.</li> <li>• Raising the profile of the Chair, Dave Courteen further to speak about business support and to encourage all members to disseminate information from the group.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>The Board noted the content of the report and approved the proposals to refresh the MBSSG (13 For; 1 Abstention).</i></b></p>	
<p><b>11.</b></p>	<p><b>Any other Business</b>            This was the last meeting for MT as Chair of The Marches LEP. MT said that it had been a “complete honour to chair the Marches LEP for the last 3 years” and that “there was still an important role for the Marches LEP in a non-devolution LA area as an enabler and facilitator and as an organisation that could bring a business voice to economic development”. MT said that “this was crucial for the area as a non-urban region as we are at risk of being left behind. I know that SR will ensure that the business and community sector voice is heard, and I am thrilled that she is taking over. Don’t forget the opportunities in the area; it is a wonderful place to live and work. It has been my honour and privilege to chair this Board.”            SR responded and thanked MT for her selfless public service and contribution to economic development across the Marches.</p>	
<p><b>Next Meeting: 24 January 2023 from 3.30pm to 5.30pm. Location TBC</b></p>		

Signed (electronically):

Sonia Roberts, Chair Marches LEP

Date: 24 January 2023