

**Minutes of the Marches LEP Performance, Risk & Monitoring Committee (PRMC)
Thursday 26 October 2023**

| Present | | |
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| Sonia Roberts | SR | Chair of the Marches LEP Board |
| Alex Green | AG | Marches LEP Board Member |
| Sara Williams | SW | Marches LEP Board Member |
| Frank Myers | FM | Marches LEP Board Member |
| Dr Simone Clarke | SC | Marches LEP Board Member (attended this meeting as an observer) |
| Dainy Runton | DR | Deputy Section 151 Officer, Telford & Wrekin Council |
| Rachael Hart (part) | RH | Deputy Section 151 Officer, Herefordshire Council |
| Jude Tranmer | JT | Chief Accountant, Herefordshire Council |
| Rachel Laver | RL | Marches LEP Chief Executive |
| Mark Schneider | MS | Marches LEP Head of Business Development and Delivery |
| Kathryn Jones | KJ | Marches LEP Head of Partnerships and Strategy |
| Mandy Powney | JG | Marches LEP Office Administrator |
| Alex Collins | AC | Deputy Area Lead, Cities & Local Growth Unit |
| Govin Aujla | AJ | Assistant Director, Cities & Local Growth Unit |
| Guest Speakers | | |
| Tim Yair | TY | Principal Net Zero Project Officer |
| Andriané Usherwood-Brown | AUB | Marches LEP, Strategic Careers Hub Lead |
| Susan White | SWh | Programme Manager, Herefordshire Council |
| Mark Averill | MA | Service Director Environment & Highways, Herefordshire Council |

| ITEM | | ACTION |
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| 1 | <p>Welcome, apologies and introductions</p> <p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Dr Simone Clarke who is a new LEP Board Member and is attending the meeting as an observer.</p> <p>Guest speakers attended for their particular agenda items: Tim Yair, Andriané Usherwood-Brown, Susan White and Mark Averill</p> <p>Apologies were received from Ken Clarke, Andrew Lovegrove, Karen Morris and Ben Jay</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p> | |
| 2 | <p>Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising</p> <p>The minutes of the last meeting on 24 August 2023 were reviewed, checked for accuracy, and approved as an accurate record of the meeting.</p> <p>Any actions from the previous minutes were either completed or would be discussed under agenda items at this meeting.</p> | |

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| 3 | <p>Performance Monitoring Exceptions</p> <p>a) Growth Deal & Getting Building Fund update</p> <p>i. HCCI Extension</p> <p>MS introduced Susan White and Mark Averill from Hereford Council who attended the meeting to discuss their request for an extension. Details of the request are to extend the Business Grants by 3 months to 31st December 2023; to</p> | |
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| | <p>divert funding from City Greening and City Trees projects to their Public Art Project; to extend the Public Art Project to 30 June 2024; to extend Project Management to 31 Dec 2024. A risk was noted that committed spend may not be defrayed by 31 Dec 2024. You can find a copy of the presentation at the link HCCI Presentation</p> <p>Questions and Comments It was confirmed that the public art project is part of the original approval. An update was requested on the actual amounts involved and the matched funding position. Action MS to circulate updated figures. Update 26.10.23 MS circulated updated figures to SR/RL. Action Completed.</p> <p>A discussion took place around the low take up of business grants which was disappointing. Even though the grants had been promoted thoroughly, take up had been quite low. Planning wasn't considered to be holding up the process. There was a general consensus that the information around this request for an extension to the HCCI project was presented at short notice and didn't allow the committee adequate time to consider the detail. Action MS will bring the item back to an interim PRMC meeting to be held in November giving the committee time to consider the proposal.</p> <p>ii. Overview of Grant position across all projects MS presented a paper on the overview of grant positions across all projects and a discussion focussed on those projects with particular concerns.</p> <p><u>Getting Building Fund (GBF) projects</u> The Integrated Construction Wetlands (ICW) project is due to finish at end of March 2024. Housing units are starting to be unlocked, but the information in report is a little bit out of date. There are 182 housing units currently unlocked. Match funding has been identified. They have spent the local grant too.</p> <p>On other projects there is more time to spend the money.</p> <p>The Stronger Communities project is starting to move forward now so those targets are on schedule.</p> <p>Pride Hill Modelling, MS met with the Council project team to discuss and they are looking to have a further extension to that project. There are delays associated with Riverside. Update 30.10.23 There will be a report on the next PRMC in November.</p> <p>Questions and comments DR highlighted that the grant on the Stronger Communities project is New College, Wellington not Station Quarter. Action MS to amend. The abbreviations Con Act Pos mean Contract, Actual & Position and Actual minus Position equates to the current position.</p> <p>Going forward, the overview report will focus on a graduated timeline so that the committee can identify the probability of projects hitting targets. Action MS to amend.</p> <p>MS will update the report to the most recent figures for the next PRMC in November. The Committee will then take a view on whether to contact project sponsors to ensure they can meet their outputs. Action. MS to bring a revised report to the next meeting of PRMC in November.</p> | <p>MS</p> <p>MS</p> <p>MS</p> <p>MS</p> |
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| | <p style="text-align: center;">Action. MP to set up a November PRMC interim meeting. Action completed.</p> <p>b) Growth Hub update At the last meeting of the Business Support Steering Group (BSSG) it was highlighted that there is an underspend on the Growth Hub budget of around £60k. £40k is linked to physical growth hub activity across this area, this is due to some delays in expenditure linked to the SPF programme. The hubs have assured us they will spend the monies by the end of the financial year. The remaining £20k underspend is linked to activity in the centre around organising events and research. At the BSSG meeting the steering group were asked to come up with suggestions on how this underspend could be used. Ideas will be collated and a view taken as to how to achieve best value/impact with these remaining funds.</p> <p>c) Key Account Management KJ gave an update on this project, which is funded by Department of Business and Trade, with a purpose of providing support to smaller foreign owned businesses across the Marches to help them expand. The project has 3 main targets; 1. the number of businesses that it supports where it is currently exceeding the target of 32, having supported 34; 2. Is to identify growth and expansion plans with 16 of those businesses and we are currently at 10. 3. Is to see 6 of those expansion projects to fruition by the end of the year. All targets are on schedule or where we would expect them to be at this point in the year.</p> | |
| <p>4.</p> | <p>Marches LEP update SR gave an update on the Marches LEP. There are regular meetings of two groups; a transition group comprising of Officers meeting weekly and a Transition Board that meets and reviews recommendations made by the Officers meeting. SR has had a meeting with representatives from DBT/MHCLG and they will be attending the next LEP Board Meeting, to assist the Board in working through the transition of functions of the LEP to Local Authorities, as required. The LEP is getting some clarity now on what is happening between LEP and the Local Authorities and have appointed legal support. The LEP has been constituted for some time as a Private Limited Company, it is important that Board Members and Directors of the LEP are aware of their responsibilities to the LEP as well as the requirements and recommendations of Government. It is important that these two align as we move forward but company law will have to take precedence.</p> | |
| <p>5.</p> | <p>Top 5 Risk Registers MS gave an update on the top risks.</p> <p>A) Corporate Risk Register A number of risks are gradually increasing because of the uncertain future of the LEP. A new risk has been added "Directors of Marches LEP Ltd not acting in the best interests of the company".</p> <p>Action MS to circulate the full register to SR and JW (151 officer) prior to each Pre-PRMC meeting. This had been completed prior to this meeting.</p> <p>Going forward there will be issues coming out of the transition process which will need to be added as strategic risks as they arise. It was agreed that the risk register would show both risks and issues.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">MS</p> |

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| | <p>B) Programme Risk Register</p> <p>Oxon Link Road</p> <p>A discussion took place as to whether this risk should be updated, as one of the concerns is affordability. If the Government agree to underwrite the NWRR this risk could then be updated. The planning meeting on the NWRR is 31 October 2023 and JW confirmed that they are waiting for clarification from the Government around the underwriting of the NWRR.</p> <p>Growth Hub risk may increase dependent on the transition processes. The message around transition needs to be clear and that business support will continue subject to confirmation of funding from the government. If in the transition, valuable pieces of work are lost or reduced, such as The Growth Hub website which disseminates information to local businesses, this would have an impact on local businesses. Shortfalls will need to be added to risks in the future.</p> <p>A new risk has been added which is Marches Careers Hub around the potential disruption to the project during the LEP transition process.</p> | |
| 6 | <p>EA Technology and National Grid Monitor</p> <p>Tim Yair, Principal Net Zero Project Officer gave a very informative overview on the following presentation. Low Voltage Substation Monitoring presentation</p> <p>This is a Substation Monitoring Project part of MEP which is looking at capacity issues. It should help us to understand what goes on at a voltage substation level and identify constraints. In this region they are installing about 200 LV monitors, some will concentrate on business communities and be in areas where we get a lot of complaints about capacity. Output of all monitors will be on a mapping system held by National Grid.</p> <p>The important part of this project is that we will be able to advise businesses on how they can do something different rather than saying no you can't do something due to grid capacity. It will in theory support 85 businesses and will start looking at innovative solutions in our area. To date the project has installed 160 VisNets. Data is being uploaded to the portal. There has been a media launch. It will take some time to fully understand the stresses on individual LV Substations and there will need to be a year's worth of data to understand it properly.</p> <p>Questions and comments</p> <p>How will all of this data create action?</p> <p>A. There is a need to collect and understand the data then it will be down to technical experts to decide how the data can support action. We need to make the best use of the grid infrastructure we currently have. The data will help us identify the best ways to put energy into businesses in the future.</p> <p>Is there any change in attitude about getting solar onto the grid?</p> <p>A. We hope to see more renewables because of this project that will match demand and maximise the grid. It is important to keep pushing that this data will help develop the Marches business base because energy constraints are an issue hampering the area's ability to attract businesses.</p> | |
| 7 | <p>Herefordshire Low Carbon Technology Centre (Energy Fund) update</p> <p>Tim Yair also gave a very informative presentation on the Herefordshire Low Carbon Technology centre.</p> <p>This is a Capital project to convert two barns in Herefordshire into a dedicated teaching space for Low Carbon Technology. Objectives include upskilling those who work in the construction and allied industries in the installation of low carbon technologies and create sustained employment in the low carbon sector; support businesses by becoming an exemplar and work with schools to raise the profile of low carbon technologies amongst pupils and promote future training and employment. The project is on schedule to complete 29th March 2024. A press release has launched and there are lots of photographs available to view as</p> | |

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| | <p>required. SR said that this was a very effective and impressive project. Well done to those concerned.</p> | |
| 8 | <p>Marches Careers Hub Update Presentation KJ and AUB gave an update and presentation on the Marches Career Hub Marches Career Hub Presentation</p> <p><u>Background on the project.</u> The Department of Education appointed the Careers and Enterprise Company to manage the project across England. Its purpose is to positively drive improvement in careers education in secondary schools and colleges. The LEP manage the hub delivery and activities and contract with each Local Authority on the Enterprise Co-ordinator posts in their areas. The Careers Hub Steering Group meets two or three times a year. This group works with other partners like Job Centre Plus and National Careers Service; there is also a Careers Hub Strategic Planning Group which assesses that this work aligns with other areas and adds value to what goes on; and a Careers Hub Operations Delivery Group where the Local Authorities come together to plan activities and ensure they meet targets and KPIs.</p> <p><u>Performance and Achievements</u> The Careers Hub covers the 3 local authority areas and includes 64 schools and colleges. It is currently in the top 3 performing careers hubs in the West Midlands area and the only one in that area that has had their delivery plan approved and funds received. Schools engage well with the Hub. We have a network of 54 business advisors that support our schools. We are currently focussing on how we can support schools working with employers and have a key focus on making sure young people are well informed on pathways open to them. A recent live broadcast around apprenticeships saw over 7000 young people take part.</p> <p>We are promoting local labour market information to ensure young people are aware of what is in their area. We have recently partnered with Telford & Wrekin Council and obtained additional funding from University of Wolverhampton, focussing on early intervention with younger people, and piloted a piece of work with 30 Year 9 students at two schools in Telford identified at being most at risk, which was very successful. AUB has case studies that she can share with anyone who would like to see the outcome of that work.</p> <p>The Future Skills Questionnaire was launched within schools which is a student survey at KS3, repeated at KS4 and again at KS5 and helps school to understand gaps in knowledge. 2935 students completed the questionnaire, and we have access to that data to ensure we address the gaps in that knowledge.</p> <p>The Volunteer network has 54 volunteers and is continually growing. Enterprise Advisers have attended over 50 planning meetings directly with schools. Enterprise Co-ordinators have hosted over 150 one to one meetings with Careers Leads in schools to ensure young people are receiving impartial advice. AUB has attended Head Teacher briefings at each of our Local Councils.</p> <p>The next steps are to build on that success. We have identified risks around short term of funding and the changing environment during LEP transition. The work relies heavily on the support work undertaken by the Accountable Body's (SCC) Finance team who help us streamline the funding and subsequently deliver the work. This contract is in place to the end of August 2024 and any changes to the delivery model would need approval from CEC, and they have emphasised the importance of this model and approach.</p> <p>FM agreed with the need to disseminate this message about careers advice whenever we can down into primary schools. Great deal of evidence now highlighting how important it is to target younger pupils. SR congratulated KJ and AUB on the work they are doing. It is a</p> | |

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| | positive message and great to see the impact of what you are doing with young people benefitting from careers advice and education. The presentation will go on to the LEP Board in November. | |
| 9 | <p>Any other business</p> <p>Dates of future meetings were approved and MP will set up those meetings in diaries. Update 31.10.23 Meetings in diaries. Action closed.</p> <p>KJ asked JT (Herefordshire) if she could chase up an update on progress made by Herefordshire Council in sealing their agreement for Marches Careers Hub funding.</p> | JT |
| | <p>Dates of Future Meetings</p> <p>November 24th 2023.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of Grant position across all projects • HCCI extension and Pride Hill Extension • Outcome of Oxon Link Road Planning Meeting. <p>14th December 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Station Quarter • Marches Centre of Excellence in Health and Social Care • Cyber Quarter: Midlands Centre for Cyber Security • Integrated Construction Wetlands <p>SR asked that all information relating to any agenda items for future meetings is shared before the meetings to give the committee opportunity to read and prepare.</p> <p>Meeting closed at 3.45pm</p> | All |