

**Minutes of the Marches LEP Ltd Board Meeting
28 November 2023 at Ludlow Racecourse
(Company Number: 11822614)**

Present:

| | | |
|-----------------------------|----|--|
| Sonia Roberts MBE | SR | Chair, Marches LEP |
| Will Westley | WW | Deputy Chair, Marches LEP & Telford Business Board Chair |
| Frank Myers MBE | FM | Herefordshire Business Board Chair |
| Cllr Jonathan Lester | JL | Leader, Herefordshire Council |
| Cllr Lezley Picton | LP | Leader, Shropshire Council (online) (part of meeting) |
| Cllr Lee Carter | LC | Cabinet Member for Place (The Economy & Neighbourhood Services), Telford & Wrekin Council |
| Dave Courteen | DC | Marches Business Support Steering Group Chair |
| Graham Guest | GG | Skills Champion; Chief Executive and Principal of Telford College |
| Clare Fenton | CF | Director, Fenton Partners & Veritherm |
| Sara Williams | SW | Marketing Manager - Northern Europe, Protolabs (online) |
| Alex Green | AG | Director, Radfield Homecare |
| Paul Kalinauckas | PK | Access to Finance Champion |
| Simone Clarke | SC | Higher Education Champion, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education & Students, Harper Adams University |
| Gordon Coppock | GC | Energy and Net Zero Champion |

In Attendance:

| | | |
|---------------------------|----|--|
| Sally Edgington | SE | Area Director SW and W Midlands, Cities & Local Growth Unit (online) |
| Govin Aujla | GA | Area Lead, Cities & Local Growth Unit |
| Alex Collins | AC | Deputy Area Lead, Cities & Local Growth Unit (online) |
| James Walton | JW | Section 151 Officer, Shropshire Council (online) |
| Ross Cook | RW | 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 |
| Rachel Laver | RL | Chief Executive, Marches LEP |
| Kathryn Jones | KJ | Head of Partnerships & Strategy, Marches LEP (part of meeting) |
| Mark Schneider | MS | Head of Business Development & Delivery (part of meeting) |
| Tim Travers | TT | Marches LEP in-house Legal Support |
| Ennis Vingoe | EV | Executive Assistant, Marches LEP |
| Gary Blackburn | GB | Project Officer, Marches LEP (part of meeting) |

Observers:

| | | |
|----------------------|--|-------------|
| Mike Streetly | | Part A only |
|----------------------|--|-------------|

Part A – Public Session

| ITEM | | ACTION |
|-------------|--|---------------|
| 1. | <p>Welcome</p> <p>1. Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest</p> <p>SR thanked everyone for attending the meeting. SR welcomed SE and TT to the meeting and said that Mike Streetly, Better Shrewsbury Transport was attending Part A of the meeting as an observer.</p> <p>SR noted that the meeting was being recorded to aid the production of the minutes.</p> <p>2. Declarations of Interest</p> | |

| | | |
|----|---|--|
| | <p>The Chair asked for any conflicts of interest and reminded members to complete the form that had been distributed for any specific Declarations of Interest for every meeting.</p> <p>The following declarations of interest were made:</p> <p>From Cllr L Picton: Item 7 - Grant Application relates to a project within my Authority's control. Item 9 - Oxon Link Road - relates to a project within my Authority's control.</p> <p>From W Westley, F Myers MBE, Cllrs Lester, Picton & Carter, G Guest and S Clarke: Item 8 – Business Board Funding</p> <p>FM said that he was now Chair of Community First in Herefordshire & Worcestershire and would update his register of interest.</p> | |
| 2. | <p>Governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-election of G Guest as a Director of Marches LEP Ltd and member of the Board. <p><i>The Board confirmed the re-election of Graham Guest as a director and member of the Board for a further period of 1 year (unanimous).</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation of items approved by correspondence. <p><i>The Board noted that the recent item by correspondence to approve the Marches LEP capital funding project call 2023 was approved on 25 November 2023.</i></p> | |
| 3. | <p>Minutes of The Marches LEP Ltd Board meeting on 19 September 2023</p> <p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2023 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> | |
| 4. | <p>LEP Chair and CEO Report</p> <p>SR introduced the report. A number of the matters would be covered during later agenda items. The Performance, Risk and Monitoring Committee (PRMC) had continued to receive updates from projects and a number were potentially in a position where they were unable to reach their stated outputs and/or match spend. It was recommended that the Board delegate responsibility to PRMC to initiate clawback procedures on projects where appropriate, where the value of the outstanding match is below £1m.</p> <p>During discussion, LC and JL expressed some concern and suggested that decisions on clawback could be approved by the full LEP Board via written procedure.</p> <p><i>The Board approved the recommendation that responsibility to initiate clawback procedures on projects where appropriate, where the value of the outstanding match is below £1m, be delegated to PRMC. (6 For; 4 Against; 1 Abstention)</i></p> | |
| 5. | <p>Minutes of the Performance Risk & Monitoring Committee (PRMC) meeting – 26 October 2023 (including risk registers)</p> <p>SR said that an interim meeting of the PRMC had also been held on Friday 25 November 2023 to provide further clarity on any projects potentially at risk. The minutes of that meeting would be available in due course.</p> | |

| | | |
|-----------|---|------------|
| | Board members noted the content of the PRMC minutes. | |
| 6. | <p>Marches Careers Hub update presentation</p> <p>SR welcomed Andriané Usherwood-Brown (AUB), the Strategic Careers Hub Lead who presented an update on the Marches Careers Hub</p> <p>The following points were covered in the presentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Careers education performance is measured nationally against the 8 Gatsby Benchmarks of Good Career Guidance. • The Marches Careers Hub drives improvement in careers education in 66 secondary schools, colleges and alternative providers. • The Hub has consistently been making excellent progress and is now one of the top 3 performing hubs in the West Midlands. • LA partners were thanked for their support for the programme. • The current priorities were to: Improve careers provision; drive more high-quality employer experiences for students and teachers; amplify apprenticeships, technical and vocational routes; focus on disadvantage; connect careers provision to the needs of local economies. <p>AUB asked LEP Board members to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the importance of employers supporting careers education across their networks. Employer standards would support employers to develop and enhance early careers programmes. • Follow the Marches Careers Hub on LinkedIn and share any posts. <p>SR thanked AUB for the informative presentation and congratulated the team on the excellent work they are doing.</p> | All |
| 7. | <p>Funding recommendations following appraisal.</p> <p><i>LP declared an interest in this item.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport Strategic Outline Business Case <p>The call opened on 2nd October 2023 and closed on 3rd November 2023. Two applications were received for funding, with only one fulfilling the minimum criteria. This is for a feasibility study for the development of an active travel corridor from Meole Brace to Coleham Head in Shrewsbury.</p> <p><i>The Board approved a grant of £75k to Shropshire Council for the development of a transport business case for an active travel corridor in Shrewsbury (Unanimous).</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low Carbon Innovative Land Use Fund <p>This £100k fund was launched at the Marches Land Use event on 28 September 2023 and closed on 17 November 2023 (following an extension of two weeks to encourage further applications). Three applications were received and following an appraisal process, it is proposed that one application is supported with funding of £31k.</p> <p><i>The Board approved a grant of £31k to Bentley Growers Ltd from the Low Carbon Innovative Land Use Fund to fund a study looking at the potential use and benefits of bio-char in chicken farming. This would be subject to clarification of outputs and outcomes with the applicant (Unanimous).</i></p> | |
| 8. | <p>Business Board Funding</p> <p><i>A number of Board members declared an interest in this item (see list at 1.2).</i></p> | |

| | | |
|-----------|--|---------------------|
| | <p>Board members discussed the proposal to provide funding to the Herefordshire and Telford Business Boards for up to five years to help ensure that the private sector continues to be engaged and heard effectively. Previously there were three Business Boards operating across the region representing each of the local authority areas. The Marches LEP provided funding for the administration of these boards to help ensure that the business voice was heard and that we had a clear channel to communicate with private businesses. Representatives of the business boards (usually the Chair) attended the Marches Growth Hub Business Support Steering Group and other LEP subgroups and fed back issues facing businesses as well as taking away information to share with their relevant boards. These relationships have enabled LEP and Growth Hub work to be shaped to meet businesses' needs. The Shropshire Business Board wound up last year with the private sector now represented at the Shropshire Enterprise Partnership Board.</p> <p>During discussion the 3 LAs confirmed their in-principle support for the proposal. MB clarified that the Shropshire Enterprise Partnership Board has 40 businesses involved and is chaired by a private sector member and is viewed as an external partnership board.</p> <p>The Chair requested further details be provided for the Shropshire Enterprise Partnership Board including the terms of reference, in order to take a view on eligibility for this proposed funding.</p> <p><i>The Board approved, in principle, that funding be provided to Herefordshire and Telford Business Boards for up to five years to help ensure that the private sector continues to be engaged and heard effectively. Further details of the exact amount of funding and whether Shropshire Enterprise Partnership should receive funding to be taken to next LEP Board meeting. (Unanimous – vote by the 6 eligible members who did not have a conflict of interest).</i></p> | <p>MB</p> <p>RL</p> |
| <p>9.</p> | <p>Oxon Link Road update <i>LP declared an interest in this item.</i></p> <p>SR informed the Board that a further paper had been received this morning from Shropshire Council and distributed to members this afternoon, which had not left enough time for Board members to read the paper in detail. In order to give members time to read and digest the information, it was proposed that Shropshire Council provide an update on the project at this meeting, and a further extraordinary LEP Board meeting be held as soon as possible to discuss this item.</p> <p>MB confirmed that on 31 October 2023, the planning committee resolved to approve the planning application with some conditions, and it is expected that these will be fully discharged very early in New Year. The LEP Board had also asked for reassurances that the business case that underpins the original award given is still valid and the traffic modelling is still strong. The Council team provided the information to the LEP that had been put forward to the planning committee, but the LEP required more detailed and updated information which has been provided by external agencies. It is felt that the business case still holds up and even with inflation, continues to provide value for money.</p> <p>The intent of award was to unlock growth and development in the area. In parallel to the planning application process the Council has been active in the market</p> | |

| | | |
|---|--|---------------------|
| | <p>bringing forward expressions of interest and we have a high level of confidence in the market appetite for development. Tender submissions are due in by 30 November, and we know from the level of interest that we are going to receive bids in excess of the budget amount. Hopefully there is reassurance to the LEP Board that the money that has been awarded is leveraging this development and the benefits are still really strong.</p> <p>In discussion the following points were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sensible and open discussion in good faith should be had regarding how Marches LEP assets should be deployed in the present and future and agreed as part of any transition arrangements. All LEP debtors should be treated equitably. • It was unacceptable to table a paper on the morning of the Board meeting. There is still not enough evidence provided to make a decision including regarding updated traffic modelling. • The objectives and outcomes of the project remain the same. • Shropshire Council would review the paper again and share additional information with the LEP Board in good time before an extraordinary meeting. This information is commercially sensitive so will be confidential. • The extraordinary meeting should include a presentation to fully explain the data against the original targets and the paper showing where we have come on this journey including quantifiable information to give a full picture in order that the Board can make an informed decision. <p>An extraordinary LEP Board meeting would be convened for next week to discuss the item. <i>Post-meeting note: an online meeting is scheduled for 10am on Thursday 7 December</i></p> <p>Shropshire Council would review the paper and share additional information with the LEP Board in good time before the extraordinary meeting.</p> | <p>RL</p> <p>MB</p> |
| <p>Part B – Private Session Confidential</p> | | |
| <p>10.</p> | <p>Confidential Marches LEP Future and Transition Arrangements The LEP Board, following extensive discussions over a number of months and options analysis, made the decision to wind down The Marches LEP Ltd, reflecting the withdrawal of support for LEPs by government. Wind-down statement</p> | |
| <p>11.</p> | <p>Any Other Business Nil</p> | |
| <p>The meeting closed at 5:30 pm.</p> | | |
| <p>Current Dates for Future Meetings:</p> | | |
| <p>Jan 2024</p> | <p>23 January 2024 – Ludlow Racecourse</p> | |
| <p>Mar 2024</p> | <p>19 March 2024 – Ludlow Racecourse</p> | |



Signed (electronically):

Sonia Roberts, Chair Marches LEP

Date: 23 January 2024