

**Minutes of the Marches LEP Ltd Board Meeting
23 January 2024 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)
Cllr Lee Carter	LC	Cabinet Member for Place (The Economy & Neighbourhood Services), Telford & Wrekin Council (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

In Attendance:

Alex Collins	AC	Deputy Area Lead, Cities & Local Growth Unit (online)
James Walton	JW	Section 151 Officer, Shropshire Council (online)
Roger Allonby	RA	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
Rachel Laver	RL	Chief Executive, Marches LEP
Kathryn Jones	KJ	Head of Partnerships & Strategy, Marches LEP
Mark Schneider	MS	Head of Business Development & Delivery
Tim Travers	TT	Marches LEP in-house Legal Support
Ennis Vingoe	EV	Executive Assistant, Marches LEP
Mandy Powney	MP	Office Administrator, Marches LEP

Observers:

Emma Bullard		
Mike Sheridan		

ITEM		ACTION
1.	<p>Welcome</p> <p>1. Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest SR thanked everyone for attending the meeting. Apologies were received from S Williams, G Guest, G Coppock and C Fenton. SR notified the board that Emma Bullard and Mike Sheridan were attending the meeting as observers.</p> <p>SR noted that the meeting was being recorded to aid the production of the minutes.</p> <p>2. Declarations of Interest 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. The following declarations of interest were made: From Cllr L Picton: Item 3 – Oxon Link Road Correspondence - relates to a project within my Authority's control.</p>	

<p>2.</p>	<p>Minutes of The Marches LEP Ltd Board meeting on 28 November 2023 and the Extraordinary Board meeting on 7 December 2023.</p> <p>The minutes of the LEP Board meeting held on 28 November 2023 and the Extraordinary LEP Board meeting on 7 December 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> <p>Matters Arising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEP Board Meeting Minutes 28 November 2023 <p>Item 8 – Business Board Funding</p> <p>This will be discussed under Item 7. No further information on the Shropshire Enterprise Partnership Board had been received from Shropshire Council.</p>	
<p>3.</p>	<p>Oxon Link Road (OLR) Correspondence</p> <p>SR told members that an open letter had been sent to the LEP Board from Better Shrewsbury Transport raising concerns about the alleged inaccuracy of some of the information received from Shropshire Council in the Oxon Link Road Business Case Refresh presented at the Extraordinary Board meeting on 7 December 2023. The OLR risk assessment paper was awaited from the Council (action from Extraordinary LEP Board meeting 7 December 2023). MB said that this was in progress and was asked to provide a current copy for the Board now.</p> <p>Action: A copy of the ‘work in progress’ risk assessment would be provided by Shropshire Council as soon as possible, and the completed risk assessment and project plan would be forwarded to the Board as soon as it was available.</p> <p>MB, speaking as a representative of the Shropshire Council promoter side of the project, confirmed the information previously presented and reiterated the assurances that had been provided to the Board in the presentation on 7 December 2023.</p> <p>A discussion took place which included the achievement of the stated outputs; the timeline of the processes prior to the commencement of the road construction; and the potential for judicial review which MB confirmed he thought was minimal as a judicial review could only be on the process, not the decision. Also, the concerns raised by the Environment Agency in the letter to Shropshire Council planning department and the processes currently in progress between the planning authority and the Environment Agency.</p> <p>MB said that he had responded via email to the LEP Chair regarding the concerns raised by Better Shrewsbury Transport in their letter. The concerns raised by Natural England and Severn Trent Water had been satisfied. The prime concern of the Environment Agency is over water extraction, making sure the construction process doesn’t pollute the water extraction points. MB stated Severn Trent are completely comfortable with the conditions, and they are the statutory undertakers for this with the Environment Agency having a supervisory role over Severn Trent and Severn Trent as a supervisor is comfortable.</p> <p>The Environment Agency concerns are expected to be wrapped up into the formal conditions that go with the planning permission. That’s the process that is going on between the planning authority and the Environment Agency currently.</p> <p>To reassure the LEP Board, Shropshire Council are really comfortable with the outputs that go with the award for OLR and they are being delivered now. The line</p>	<p>MB</p>

	<p>of the road is one of the last bits to fall into place, but it is all predicated upon the road opening up the site to the development. The outputs are significant and will easily be achieved. For the timeline, following the planning decision there will be a report to full Council which, if approved, will go to the Department for Transport (DfT). The business case work for DfT will be done by the autumn when there will be a 2-month period for DfT to award. It could be early next year when we are on site.</p> <p>The Board also discussed whether a separate monitoring group was required for the OLR project outputs and the need to ensure that proper process is followed to follow-up the concerns raised to the Board, to the satisfaction of the members directors of The Marches LEP Ltd.</p> <p>The following actions were agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email from M Barrow to be circulated to the board. • A written response to the specific concerns raised in the letter to the Marches LEP Board would be provided by Shropshire Council to the Board along with an updated risk register and project plan. • The response would be reviewed by the LEP officers, in-house legal support and LEP Board, prior to being sent to Better Shrewsbury Transport. 	<p>EV MB TT, SR, RL</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>LEP Chair and CEO Report RL highlighted some areas in the report. Work is taking place to complete 'year-end' financial processes and the budget for next year has been drafted.</p> <p>The Marches Careers Hub contract which ends in August 2024 will be novated at the end of March 2024 and one LEP post related to that contract will be retained with Shropshire Council. The Key Account Management and Marches Growth Hub contracts end on 31 March 2024 and some annual reports relating to these contracts will need submitting during April/May 2024.</p> <p>All the available funds related to the Capital Funding Call are in the process of being contracted and the list of projects is contained in the paper. The Joint Committee will manage those projects following the winding-up of the Marches LEP.</p> <p>The cash flow projection was up to the end of March 2024. There is currently a large amount of Marches Investment Fund monies being held due to some of the Marches Energy Grant projects taking some time to submit their claims, but the funding is all committed.</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p>Confirmation of item approved by correspondence. The Board noted that the recent item by correspondence to request approval for funding from the Marches LEP Capital Funding Project Call 2023 of £612,793 to 6 applicants, subject to due diligence and formal contracting, was approved on 20 December 2023.</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p>Performance Risk & Monitoring Committee (PRMC) decision and minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2023.</p>	

	<p>SR told the meeting that the current focus for PRMC was to ensure delivery of project outputs. MS was following up with project promoters and some have been able to evidence the required spend. It had been agreed by the committee to extend some of the projects (details in the paper).</p> <p>RL said that for the Hereford City Centre Improvement project Herefordshire Council would not know how much spend there will be until June 2024. It was possible that clawback could be initiated but the LEP was continuing to work with the project promoter to resolve this, and PRMC was monitoring progress.</p> <p>Board members noted the content of the PRMC minutes.</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p>Update on Transition Arrangements</p> <p>SR and RL went through the paper, which is the factual position, and highlighted some areas to the Board.</p> <p>The 2 transition groups, the LEP Board Transition Group and Officers' Group LEP Transition (LAs and Marches LEP) continue to meet weekly. A huge amount of activity has been undertaken in the last few weeks. An insolvency practice has been appointed today - Evelyn Partners and will be invited to the LEP Board Transition Group meeting, when they are available.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>LEP Board member representation on other boards and committees</p> <p>Board members represent the Marches LEP on a number of different boards and committees across the region. As members resign their directorships of the LEP they will need to resign from these boards as LEP representatives. Some organisations may, however, wish to invite individuals to continue in their own right.</p> <p>Action: The list of current memberships would be distributed, and members were asked to make any additions/deletions to this by return.</p> <p>Some of the groups e.g. Transport Officers Group, Marches Business Support Steering Group and Marches Energy Group will wind up with the LEP, unless the LAs or other bodies wish to support them to continue. These will be logged as part of the transition processes. The HE/FE Group has already agreed to continue as a self-managed group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>Future Business Board Support</p> <p>It had been agreed at the last LEP Board meeting that funding will be contracted to support the business boards for 5 years. A figure of £6.5k per year had been suggested.</p> <p>The type of future support required to deliver business leadership in the region and how the existing activities could continue without LEP support, was discussed. FM requested that additional LEP legacy funds be considered to support this. Any allocation of LEP funds beyond the existing remit would need to be through an open and transparent process, and any duplication with any work the Joint Committee would be doing in facilitating future business representation, would need to be avoided. The government would be funding this work.</p> <p>MB reiterated the position of the Joint Committee that legacy LEP funds would be used for economic development, as per the government guidance and that in</p> 	<p>EV, All</p>

	<p>Shropshire, the Shropshire Economic Partnership would lead on business representation as it does now.</p> <p>RA said that LAs were awaiting further government guidance on long-term arrangements for supporting economic development and suggested caution in making judgements on what legacy payments may be committed from the transition phase, and what government expectations and funding would be in the next phase.</p> <p>Action: It was agreed that the decision regarding the amount to be funded would be delegated to the PRMC, unless this amount was materially different to that suggested, then the decision would be brought back to the Board.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer Agreement The LAs were currently reviewing the draft Transfer Agreement and following a meeting of the 3 legal departments, nothing fundamental had been raised. SR asked that the feedback be passed to RL by the end of this week when the draft agreement will be shared with the transition group. Action: LA feedback on the draft Transfer Agreement to be passed to RL by latest 26 January 2024. <p>Members raised concerns that should the Transfer Agreement not be agreed in good time, the proposed timeline for the winding-up of the company would not be met i.e. by 31 March 2024. This could cause difficulties for the Board as there would be no LEP administrative support available by then. Action: A risk management plan would be produced to cover actions required if the winding-up of the company goes beyond 31 March 2024.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebration occasion SR suggested that a celebration could be held to thank Marches LEP staff and Board members past and present for all they have done to contribute to the success of the organisation over the years. This location is to be agreed and suggestions are welcomed. SR asked that anyone who could offer any assistance in the organisation of the occasion to contact EV as soon as possible. 	<p>SR, RL</p> <p>RA, MB, KK</p> <p>RL</p> <p>All</p>
8.	<p>Any Other Business Nil</p>	
	The meeting closed at 4:55pm.	
Current Dates for Future Meetings:		
Feb 2024	20 February 2024 3:30pm – 5:30pm Board Meeting at Ludlow Racecourse	
Mar 2024	12 March 2023 3.30pm – 6.15pm Board Meeting at Ludlow Racecourse	

Signed (electronically):

Sonia Roberts, Chair Marches LEP

Date: 20 February 2024