

WORCESTERSHIRE LEP BOARD MEETING

Tuesday 6th April 2021

13.30 - 15.30

Virtual

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|-----------|--|--------------|
| 1. | Welcome and Apologies | 13.30 |
| 2. | Declarations of Interest | |
| 3. | Minutes of 21st January 2021 | |
| 4. | Matters Arising and Action List from 21st January
- Correspondence | |
| 5. | WLEP Economic Strategy (2020 – 2040) – Luke Willetts
(FOR DECISION) | 13:45 |
| 6. | WLEP Local Skills Report – Gary Woodman / Judy Chadwick
(FOR DECISION) | 14:30 |
| 7. | AOB and Close | 15:20 |

Board Meeting Dates for 2021 (all Thursdays at 10am – 1pm)

- **27th May**
- **15th July**
- **23rd September**
- **25th November**



WORCESTERSHIRE LEP BOARD MEETING

Thursday 21st January 2021

10:00am – 13:00pm

Virtual Meeting via Zoom Video Conferencing

PRESENT:

Mark Stansfeld	(MS)	Non-Executive Chair
Gary Woodman	(GW)	Chief Executive, Worcestershire LEP
Chris Walklett	(CW)	Partner, Bishop Fleming
Cllr Simon Geraghty	(SG)	Leader of WCC and Cabinet Member for Finance
Nicola Whiting MBE	(NW)	Chief Strategy Officer, Titania
Cllr Marc Bayliss	(MB)	Worcester City Council (representing Southern DCs)
David Green	(DG)	Vice Chancellor, University of Worcester
Jennifer Long	(JL)	Director, Ice Blue Marketing and Design
John Dillon	(JD)	Managing Director, GJS Dillon
Sue Jordan	(SJ)	Non-Executive Board Member
Nick Baldwin CBE	(NB)	Chairman, Dimensions UK
Stuart Laverick	(SL)	Principal & Chief Executive, Heart of Worcestershire
Sue Jordan	(SJ)	Non-Executive Board Member
Carl Arntzen	(CA)	Managing Director, Worcester Bosch Group

IN ATTENDANCE:

Luke Willetts	(LW)	Director of Operations, Worcestershire LEP
Phoebe Dawson	(PD)	Director of Business Engagement, Worcestershire LEP
Ostap Paparega	(OP)	Head of North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration
Linda Smith	(LS)	CEO, Betaden / Director of Enterprise, WLEP
Steph Simcox	(SS)	Head of Finance, Worcestershire County Council
Paul Robinson	(KD)	Chief Executive, Worcestershire County Council.
Clare Hannah	(CH)	Cities and Local Growth Unit BEIS
Alison Dickinson	(AD)	Project Manager, Worcestershire LEP

APOLOGIES:

Cllr Fran Oborski	(FO)	Deputy Leader of Wyre Forest Council (representing Northern DCs)
Oliver Hindle	(OH)	Assistant Director, Cities & Local Growth Unit BEIS
Sarah Greer	(SG)	Deputy Vice Chancellor & Provost, University of Worcester

AGENDA ITEM

1. Welcome and Apologies

- 1.1 MS opened the meeting and welcomed the Board to a New Year and although with challenges in the economy, explained the WLEP were well placed to respond to the economic recovery and set the strategy for the future of Worcestershire working with its partners.

MS stated the aim of today is to have a discussion on the economic conditions, test our future plans and focus on the delivery that is happening. MS then briefly ran through today's agenda and introduced Alison Dickinson, Clare Hannah, and David Green the latter two alternates for representatives normally around the table.

2. Notification of Declarations / Conflicts of Interest

- 2.1 No interests declared.

3. Minutes of 27th November 2020

- 3.1 The minutes were agreed.

4. Matters Arising and Action List from 27th November – Correspondence

- 4.1 GW gave a progress overview of the Inclusivity and Diversity work, with the development of an action plan coming to a future Board. **ACTION GW**

- 4.2 The programme development group that was approved at the last Board is still to be established.

- 4.3 GW stated that the Worcestershire 5G company will launch in Feb, with the funding agreement still to be defined, but this was not critical to starting the company.

- 4.4 Regarding MHSP, LS has been invited to the Science Park Board for late Feb. CW noted that the relationship between Malvern Hills Science park and Betaden could be improved. MS indicated that there will be a separate session to discuss this. **ACTION GW**

- 4.5 The virtual conference feedback had been circulated and despite plans to do a conference in March, looking at the virtual events the team already have planned this was not progressed on this timescale.

5. Growth Hub Transition Progress and Forward Strategy

- 5.1 PD talked through the paper to the board. Following the May 2020 WLEP Board decision to transfer the growth hub operation under the LEP this was completed on the 8th January against the timeline of 31st Jan which we set.

- 5.2 PD outlined the progress made on the topic of Physical Hubs (with 3 bases in the county.) The data and metrics used to improve intelligence

and knowledge. This will also develop a new CRM strategy and reporting framework. Strategic partnerships and business support simplification: including the customer journey.

- 5.3 PD then talked through the funding complexities and programmes that the growth hub are delivering in the next 3 months. The team have plenty of activity to deliver.
- 5.4 CW highlighted that this report had been viewed by the FAR Committee and was concerned that the KPIs should not be set that are to indirect to the activity of the growth hub such as Jobs created or safeguarded.
- 5.5 PD responded by saying that BEIS had national measures which we had to report on and we had a local set of measures. The local set are more focused on the operational performance. We are looking at other growth hubs for best practice.
- 5.6 JL asked if the data sharing work between projects, ie promotion of the Tech Tuesdays for Betaden and why had we segmented the market of businesses by employee numbers. PD responded that cross promotion between projects was possible as those projects are driven by one CRM and the WLEP marketing team. Also, employees was a measure but we agree that our business intelligence databases were capable of looking at turnover.
- 5.7 JL asked about the strategy to identify tech businesses. GW responded that this was one of the main benefits of bringing the growth hub under the LEP, this included the CRM strategy.
- 5.8 JD stated that data sharing between public and private or willingness to open book growing businesses to bring private and public support to accelerate the growth of that company. What is the role of the business panel? PD responded by stating intelligence, knowledge and recognising what businesses value to act as a sounding board for the team to support businesses and act an advocate for the growth hub.

6. WLEP Local Industrial Strategy / Projects

- 6.1 LW conducted a short presentation on Worcestershire LEP LIS and Project Pipeline. Focusing on a refresher on the direction of the strategy agreed at previous boards, but also focused on a project pipeline to deliver against the strategy.

JD said the property market has changed with the large properties required for those businesses to expand. However now we need to focus on start up and small companies with small/medium business units. However, the real requirement is flexible office space. In some cases, people want to be near good points of connective, therefore its not always city centre. But where we need to intervene in service office start up, is what is required. **Action LW to consider for the pipeline**

- 6.2 MB highlighted that unemployment is to rise to as much as 10%, therefore we need more flesh on bones in the area. **ACTION Skills to come to the next Board**
- 6.3 The board then had a discussion, CW commenting that there are a number of Worcestershire based businesses that are struggling with Brexit. But he has found that he hasn't seen a reduction in appetite for overseas businesses to set up in the UK.

- 6.4 CW commented that he feels there are a number of businesses that would like to have their base in Worcestershire. **ACTION PD to follow up on the soft-landing offer**
- 6.5 NW raised the point that young people in particular are going to look for jobs that are easy to get to. There will be a need to invest in transport to places of work that aren't already easily accessible via public transport.
- 6.6 DG highlighted 2 areas of interest where he feels there may be demand for higher skilled people which are health and education.
- 6.7 JL we need to work with businesses on supply chains across the Midlands, working with our regional partners to identify investment opportunities.

- 6.8 MS wanted to add as an action:
- Work on the pipeline.
 - Move outward and build relationships.

MB stated that it would be very useful if someone could map out which various groups the board are engaged with. This will help if we are to lobby for national funds. **Action Development of the Stakeholder plan GW**

It was agreed that further work would take place on the pipeline and the Stakeholder plan

7. Innovation Sub-Board Proposal and Recruitment

- 7.1 LS stated that the idea behind this sub-board proposal is to lead a strategic action plan to drive innovation across the county and coordinate the activity across the ideas foundation and make it relevant to our local industry strategy.
- 7.2 Rationale behind this is to coordinate what we have, to create action plans and agree what we want this board to drive across the wider agenda.
- 7.3 JD commented that is it important to appeal to non-tech companies also.
- 7.4 LS commented that there will be massive opportunity for commercial supply chains in the future. A really focused sub-board looking at a relevant strategy to activate the plan over the next 20 years is very important.
- 7.5 SG commented that if you want a true innovation board, it's about getting the right people on there to add value.

The WLEP Board agreed the recommendation **ACTION GW/LS**

8. WLEP Programme Overview

a) GBF Programme Alison Dickinson

- 8.1 AD thanked the board for their support in reviewing the LEP reports and helpful observations and feedback thus far on the 12 projects.

- 8.2 AD then proceeded to give an overview of various building projects in progress in the county and stated that all projects are making good progress so far.
- 8.3 SG commented that considering the short time frames involved, there is a good selection of projects and things are moving quickly, which is excellent progress and a credit to the partners.
- 8.4 SL mentioned that using local suppliers for these projects would be beneficial.
- 8.5 AD said they will be looking to include Worcestershire based contractors. The Board congratulated the executive team for the work on these programmes and the work of the partners to put Worcestershire in place of delivery on its promises.

b) Update on the Towns Fund and Future High Streets Fund

- 8.6 GW introduced Ostap Paparega (OP) who gave some updates on The Future Highstreets Fund in Kidderminster and the Town Deal in Redditch:
- Kidderminster secured £20.5m from the Future Highstreets fund, the 5th largest allocation in the country.
 - OP then talked through the project and stressed that superfast broadband would be imperative for the success of the project.
 - OP noted that the funding is for site infrastructure. They are hoping to attract some private investment.
- 8.7 OP said that they are enabling Redditch to start a transformation journey to transform from a traditional town to a smart town.

Key interventions selected by the board are:

- Train station improvements.
 - Creating of digital manufacturing centre (to build on the police station site).
 - Town Centre Intervention Project.
 - Package of Public Ground and Infrastructure Improvements.
- 8.8 MB gave a brief update on The Future High Streets Fund, delighted to be one of the other 15 places in the country to get their full allocation, just under £18m. Going to use that mostly in Angel Street.
- Hoping to move the Swan Theatre Company back into the city centre and connect it with the Corn Exchange (hoping to acquire both The Corn Exchange and the Scala Theatre)
 - They are working on infrastructure improvement in the area.
 - Hoping to acquire Trinity House (The old Co-Op) Currently in negotiations.
 - MB said in reference to the Town's deal, we are the only place in Worcestershire that was invited to bid for both the Future High Streets Fund and The Town's fund.
 - Biggest parts of the cash from the bid are going to Shrub Hill.
 - Looking to improve cycle network.

9. Update from Chair of FAR Committee – Chris Walklett - c) WLEP Finance Report Q3 2020/21 – Steph Simcox

9.1 CW gave an update on the last meeting:

- More time was spent on the Growth Hub Risk Register. The unknowns around the replacement for EU funding currently present the most risk to businesses.
- CW has agreed with LW and GW that he will continue as Chair of the LEP Board until a replacement has been agreed. CW personally thanked LW and SW for their help and expertise.

9.2 SW gave an update on the Q3 position:

- Spoke at the last board about the potential delay in the Northern Links Improvement scheme, we will be able to deliver that scheme by the end of the financial year. But we should be able to use funding across other LEP schemes if we need to.
- There is some underspending from the executive team, all underspend gets put into the reserves for use in future years and some of that will need to be kept for potential redundancies.
- Over £1m available to be re-allocated to future schemes.
- No major risks or issues at this point in the year.

11. WLEP NED Recruitment update – Gary Woodman 12:45

- 16 applications received and are being independently reviewed.

12. AOB and Close 13:00

- No other business from the board. MS thanked everyone for their time and closed the meeting.

MATTERS ARISING (ACTION LIST & CORRESPONDENCE)

Action List from meeting January 2021

ACTION – Develop the Inclusivity and Diversity Action Plan – GW

ACTION – LS to present at the MHSP Board meeting in February. A follow up session to be planned in a separate meeting from the Board looking at the Science Park strategy and connectivity to the LEP. – GW

ACTION – Consideration of commercial property offer within the pipeline and the issue of skills to come to the next Board meeting – LW / GW

ACTION – Follow up on the development of a soft landing offer within inward investment strategy – PD

ACTION – Development of a stakeholder plan - GW

ACTION – Innovation Board to be established in April 2021 - LS