WORCESTERSHIRE LEP BOARD MEETING

Friday 23 January 2026
10:00 – 13:00

Venue: Elizabeth Garrett Anderson building (Room EGA 1008), Severn Campus, University of Worcester, Worcester, WR2 5JN

1.	**Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest**	**10:00**
2.	**Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising**	
3.	**Local Innovation Partnership Fund (LIPF) bid – Luke** *(FOR DECISION)*	**10:15**
4.	**Keep Britain Working and Worcestershire response – Judy Gibbs** *(FOR INFORMATION / DISCUSSION)*	**10:45**
5.	**WLEP Communications Report and Branding – Alex Price** *(FOR DECISION)*	**11:45**
	CLOSED WLEP BOARD SESSION	
6.	**Forward Planning 2026/27 – All** *(FOR DECISION)*	**12:15**
7.	**AOB**	**12:50**
8.	**Close**	**13:00**

Future Meeting Dates ***(all Fridays 10:00-13:00 unless otherwise stated)***

5 March 2026 *(N.B. Thursday @ 1100-1400)*	25 September 2026
29 May 2026	20 November 2026
31 July 2026	

WORCESTERSHIRE LEP BOARD MEETING

Friday 28th November
10:00 – 13:00
Venue: Thorlux Lighting, Merse Rd, Redditch B98 9HH.

PRESENT:

Paul Walker	(PW)	Chair Worcestershire LEP
Jennifer Long	(JL)	Vice Chair- Director, Ice Blue Marketing and Design
Gary Woodman	(GW)	Chief Executive, Worcestershire LEP
Michelle Dowse	(MD)	Principal, Heart of Worcestershire College.
Nigel Hall	(NH)	Chair/Lead for WLEP Innovation Board
Cllr Beverley Nielsen	(BN)	Rep for SW Districts
John Dillon	(JD)	Managing Director, GJS Dillon
Carl Arntzen	(CA)	Managing Director, Worcester Bosch (ONLINE)
Cllr Karen May	(KM)	Rep for NW Districts
Cllr Alan Amos	(AA)	Rep for Worcestershire County Council
Alex Collins	(AC)	Area Lead, DBT
Judy Gibbs	(JG)	Director of Skills, LEP
James Speller	(JS)	Managing Director, Speller Metcalfe
Sue Jordan	(SJ)	Non-Executive Board Member

IN ATTENDANCE:

Alex Price	(AP)	Communications & PR Manager, Worcestershire LEP
Darren Schrouder	(DS)	Worcestershire Growth Hub Manager
Helena Augousti	(HA)	WLEP
Helen Mulvenna	(HM)	SkillsBoost Project Manager

APOLOGIES:

Jeremy Cieslik	(JC)	Non-Executive Board Member
Cllr Sharon Harvey	(SH)	Rep for N Districts
Luke Willetts	(LW)	Deputy CEO, Worcestershire LEP
Jane Britton	(JB)	Pro Vice Chancellor of Communications and External Affairs at the University of Worcester
David Blake	(DB)	Managing Director of Worcester City Council (Cex Rep)

1.	**<u>Welcome and Apologies</u>**	**<u>ACTION</u>**
1.1	**PW** welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were given.	
1.2	**PW** asked for any new declarations of interest. No new interests declared.	
2.	**<u>Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising</u>**	
2.1	**BN** commented that in the previous minutes there was a reference to WLEP Board composition, reiterating the district case and emphasising that current District Board members also have business experience along with a political focus.	
3.	**<u>Innovation update</u>**.	**<u>ACTION</u>**
3.1	**RP** presented the innovation strategy paper to the Board, explaining the need to bring together a number of actions and priorities into one strategic document.	
3.2	The meeting was then opened to questions. <u>Strategy comments</u>: • This is very good as it brings together all the pieces of this agenda and connects them, this helps us support and understand where the areas of innovation are in Worcestershire and how could we grow them. • Can we develop Case studies that not only identify these companies and help to show our strengths.	
3.3	• A great strategy that until now has been missing, disappointed to not see more about FE's and education, could this area be expanded.	**RP**
3.4	**RP** summarised: communication is key to this strategy, the website has been adjusted, and case studies are the next step. <u>LIPF comments</u>: • Need to think about where we want to be in the future, not just where we are now and must consider working across borders. Should we be looking at neighbouring areas? • Looking at the clusters, they look interesting, defence is one of them, we have a strong defence presence, we might need to think about being specific about defence and cyber opportunities? • As well as FE opportunities, HE should also be considered, especially with possible cross border collaboration. To bring in further research capability. • Part of this bid will be working on the adoption and training of the Tech already available especially within Health & Social Care located in UoW and FE Colleges.	

3.5	• Working with the HE institution that supports the clusters should be considered rather than the one that is closest. • WCC needs to be the anchoring body, but with collaboration with the District Council's. • UKRI is open to working with all bidders to support their application. • Concerns that if we work with a HE that isn't in Worcestershire, that we might not see the impact of it locally. • One of the keys to this is collaboration, we need to leverage this as a collective of people and resources, we need to come together and really work hard to input to the bid. **RP** summarised that the County is already working on involvement the Regional Defence Cluster, that there is still data to be released on the definitions of the sub sectors, that stakeholder engagement has already begun and finally, that there could be as few as 8 successful bids, so as a County we need to successfully showcase our specialism. **ACTION**: Feedback sent to HA to send on.	ALL
4. 4.1 4.2 4.3	**SkillsBoost update:** **JG** presented to the Board the analysis of the SkillsBoost programme and the feedback from the businesses and the training that was invested in and the inputting of Workforce Planning into companies that took advantage of the funding. The meeting was then opened to questions. Comments: • SkillsBoost is great, but across a business there might be some employees that are eligible and some that aren't, due to the postcode lottery and funding streams. Which limits companies from upskilling some staff members. • Those SME's and Sole Traders who might not have a business plan are using SkillsBoost money with no real way of knowing if it has benefitted them. • SkillsBoost should be based on ambition, not on the geography of the employees, as bigger businesses that want to grow might not be able to. **JG** summarised that there can be gaps in specific courses being booked down to a lack of availability, that businesses that were identified not to have a business plan were referred back to the WGH and that data is being collated on local courses that recipients couldn't find. **ACTION**: Presentation to be circulated.	**ACTION** **HA**

5	**Communications Update.**	**ACTION**
5.1	**AP** presented to the Board. The meeting was then opened to questions.	
5.2	Comments: • We need good links with other marketing managers to collaborate on their events. • Thanks to Mark Stansfield for the space for the Angels Event. • We need more female founders and investors, from the Women In Innovation event. **AP** summarised that conversations with partners and stakeholders are taking place and that the next Angel Event will be solely female founders.	
5.3	Re-branding: • Keeping the LEP branding might be confusing to people and businesses now, as LEP's 'were abolished' in 2023/4 in many peoples mind, particularly those in other areas of the country. • We need to focus on long term strategy, as that is what the Board is here to guide. • Shouldn't be called a LEP, maybe a name with Enterprise or business in it. • It needs to be simplified for everyone. • Being called a LEP might be holding us back with funders etc. • What is the branding of the stakeholders we are collaborating with, we need to think about re-branding now, not in the future. • Consider changing the branding after we've sent the LIPF bid off. • Need to think about the strength of the brand moving forward using terminology that is no longer modern (LEP's)	
5.4	**The Board made a decision that the LEP needs to be re-branded moving forward**.	**AP**
5.5	**PW** then summarised, that a proposal needs to be brought before the Board in a future meeting.	

7	**AOB**	**ACTION**
7.1	**GW** confirmed to the Board that the Business Board Network have reached out to members since the Autumn Budget, they are writing to Ministers on the LEP's/Business Boards behalf to highlight the funding position and risks on delivery that this presents.	
7.2	**PW** touched on Board membership, open to funding contributions from any partner, who would see value from this investment. The value of the LEP is that it's always been a majority private business member majority at board level. Open to all options but needs to remain a private sector led body, to give it creditability	
7.3	**PW** then confirmed that JD is to be re-elected as a Board member. Agreed by the Board. **Action**: Send confirmation letter.	**HA**
7.4	PW and the Board then thanked Sue Jordan for her contribution to the LEP over her period of Board membership. She had made valuable contribution and made an impact on the design of the work and implementation.	
	Dates of Next meeting 2026: 23rd January 5th March (Skills Show) 29th May 31st July 25th September 20th November	