Worcestershire
Local Enterprise Partnership

WORCESTERSHIRE LEP BOARD MEETING

Friday 1 December 2023
10:00 – 13:00
Venue: Speller Metcalfe Small Works Office, Chequers Close, Malvern, WR14 1GP.

1.	**Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest**	**10.00**
2.	**Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising**	
3.	**LEP Integration Plan submission – Paul / Gary** *(FOR INFORMATION)*	**10:05**
4.	**WLEP FAR Committee Update** **Q2 Finance Report – Steph** *(FOR DECISION)*	**10:20**
5.	**Strategic Comms Update – Alex** *(FOR INFORMATION)*	**10.30**
6.	**Business Representative Organisation Intel and Insights – Various** *(FOR DISCUSSION)* • *Chamber of Commerce – Sharon Smith* • *NFU – Emma Hamer* • *Worcestershire Ambassadors – Jim McBride* • *FSB – Mike Goodall*	**10:45**
7.	**WLEP Strategy: Prioritisation Update – Gary / Luke** *(FOR DECISION)*	**12:15**
8.	**AOB** • GBF Programme Dashboard Q2 2023/23 • Local Area Energy Planning update	**12:55**
9.	**Close**	**13.00**

Future Meeting Dates

26 January 2024	**10:00 – 13:00**
8 March 2024	**10:00 – 13:00**
17 May 2024	**10:00 – 13:00**
19 July 2024	**10:00 – 13:00**
20 Sept 2024	**10:00 – 13:00**
29 Nov 2024	**10:00 – 13:00**

1.	**Welcome and Apologies**	**ACTION**
1.1	**PW** welcomes **CL** to the Board.	
1.2	No interests declared.	
2.	**Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising**	
	Matters Arising	
2.1	**SJ** asked about apprenticeships and how they are being advertised, especially to those that want to change career at an older age. **GW** confirmed that the offerings around apprenticeships has grown, and that Worcestershire is doing a lot. **LW** also confirmed to the board, that the website has recently been re-modelled.	
2.2	**NH** commented on the accuracy of the previous minutes regarding EDI, he has not been involved in this. **GW** informed the board that there are sessions planned around the EDI Agenda.	
2.3	**NH** followed on with a question: do we have a policy in the LEP on diversity and inclusion? GW confirmed that there is, but not at Board level.	
2.4	The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record.	
	Action – link to the new website sent to **SJ**. **Action** – link/policy to be sent to **NH**.	**LW** **GW**
3.	**LEP Transition (DBT) and DC Leaders Correspondence**	
3.1	**PW** invited discussion from the board regarding the DC Leaders correspondence.	
3.2	A discussion followed, covering their thoughts and comments on the correspondence.	
3.3	**SJ** asked for clarification, that after April, does the LEP not exist as an entity. **SG** was clear that he believes the LEP should continue doing their good work, and that WCC can help provide some stability for the next 18 months, recognising LEP responsibilities will transfer to upper tier authorities from April 2024. WCC values the business led LEP model, and how it can then feed back into the Economic Development at WCC level.	
3.4	**CL** asked for clarification on whether the DC's must answer to stakeholders in context of UKSPF. **GW** & **VA** confirmed that each district does it slightly differently, but they all have boards and stakeholders that they must answer too.	
3.5	**SJ** asked if after April, the DC have the money and not the LEP. **LW** confirmed that economic development funding streams are now routed via Local Authorities (e.g. Towns Deals, Future High Street, Levelling Up and UKSPF), however the core LEP funding grant will cease at end of 23/24, and instead upper tier authorities will receive some (TBC) funding for 24/25 as they integrate LEP responsibilities into their organisations.	
3.6	**SJ** also stated that she could see the point of the DC's wanting to have a seat on the board and more of a say, but also doesn't want it to undo the good work the LEP has already done in terms of diluting voice and influence of the private sector.	
3.7		

3.8	**TW** voiced that while the government choosing DC's for the money, is a big change, is also aware that there still has to be a coherent county wide approach. **PW** confirmed that the board & LEP needs to have a strategic plan. The board need to stay focussed and is therefore reluctant to make radical changes to WLEP governance model/arrangements before the government have released their guidance on the new business representation and strategic economic planning responsibilities to be transferred from LEP's.	
3.9	Private sector members of the board agreed, that if the DC's take voting seats and the board becomes an advisory board only, that they would consider their position based on reduced value/impact. This was in response to the governance proposals from DCs that suggested giving sole voting rights to a revamped LEP Board with increased representation of public sector seats.	
3.10	Members also agreed that they would need to wait for the government guidance to come out before they make any changes or decisions.	
3.11	PW also reflected on the fact there were four private sector board members not in attendance and would like to seek their views so a fully informed response could be issued back to DCs.	
3.12	**TW** asked **PW** to please write the DC's a reply**. PW** confirmed he will. **Action** – to get the views of board members not present and come back to the districts.	**PW/GW**
4.	**WLEP FAR Committee update – Risk Register**	
4.1	**LW** explained the function of the FAR to the board.	
4.2	**LW** updated the board on the register and changes made by the committee at the last meeting. Currently there are 8 live risks, 1 was downgraded, 4 were upgraded, 2 were closed,1 stayed the same and 1 was added.	
4.3	The main escalation was Political change, the mitigation strategy decided by the committee, was to create an integrated plan with DC's and WCC.	
4.4	**SJ** stated that with the headlines focussing on the LEP's closing, going forward, businesses will be even more confused, therefore the board/LEP need to provide clarity, and be clear on the message to business.	
5.	**WLEP Strategy Session: Business Environment**	
5.1	**JL** introduced this part of the agenda & updated the board on visits carried out to the Growth Hub (GH) following the last board meeting.	
5.2	**JL** stated that she believed the board don't always understand the role of the GH. So, **JL** & **PW** arranged meetings with members of the GH and attended some events to get a better understanding.	
5.3	**JL** commented that maybe the marketing needs to be clearer on how the GH can help you as a business, and that targets being set by DC's/UKSPF and the reporting on these, is taking away from their day-to-day role.	

5.4	**LW** then showed the board a presentation on the GH.	
5.5	**NH** asked for a summary of the top 3 requirements from market. Skills was commented as one of these. **CL** stated that some of the issues faced are getting students into trainee positions, recruitment of staff to train these students and lack of funding from employers.	
5.6	**SJ** commented that with more money being invested in apprenticeships, there is less for CPD.	
5.7	**LW** told the board that at the recent Business Roundtable Hewett Recruitment discussed a current trend for lack of spending on recruitment and talent hoarding, i.e., keeping staff and dealing with lower productivity.	
5.8	**JC** then asked if the GH keep a list of businesses that have closed and the reason why and is a plan created for where the businesses want to be in 3 years. **LW** replied that the Account Managers handle this, they will keep going back to businesses and help move them forward. **NH** stated that there should be 10 case studies that clearly show how the GH has helped, that board members can use in their communications.	
5.9	The board then discussed the UKSPF outcomes, **CL** commented that there seems to be a lack of joined up thinking, e.g. Wyre Forest outcomes don't put a lot of money/emphasis on skills.	
5.10	**PW** suggested that there needs to be a coherent Worcestershire strategy which sits alongside WCC thinking, this could be driven by the LEP. **JL** asked if the reporting could be more automated/digital, so it frees up the Account Managers to see and manage the businesses.	
5.11	The board then discussed a Business Environment Sub Board and the merits of it.	
5.12	**Action** – send 10 case studies to the board. **Action** – board to send ideas/thoughts regarding the Business Env. Sub board to **LW** & **JL**.	**LW** **All**
6.	**Innovation**	
6.1	**LW** & **NH** present to the board.	
6.2	**NH** tells the board that there needs to be an innovation model in Worcestershire as there is nothing currently and asked the board if is this a journey that they want to go on.	
6.3	**CL** asked if there needed to be better engagement with FE's to share what innovation is and what FE's role in this is.	
6.4		

6.5 6.6 6.7	**PW** commented that he believes the strategy needs to be homegrown and driven by the private sector, the LEP needs to be the voice of this and have a strategic plan. The board then discuss the possible innovation models and who could be involved. **GW** then informs the board of a planned Angel Investors Event on 21st November at WCCC. **NH** asks the board if they agree to a sub-board which will steer this. **GW** & **LW** to come up with the strategic and operational plan. **Action** – let **NH** know of any individuals who can sit on this board, be in this environment.	**All**
7. 7.1 7.2 7.3	**Conference** **GW** updated the board on the plans for the conference. It was decided that if the board want a hybrid model, then it will need to be moved from November to February. The board approved the hybrid model and change in date.	
8. 8.1	**AOB** None.	