

### 3 Worcestershire LEP Chair and Vice Chair Recruitment

#### **WLEP BOARD RECOMMENDATION**

The Board is asked to:

- Review and note the current WLEP Board composition;
- Review and approve strategy to seek external support to identify and appoint a permanent WLEP Board Chair, including authorisation of a budget of up-to £15k;
- Note the requirement to recruit to a number of additional WLEP Board roles including vice chair (private sector), and diversity champion;
- Identify and appoint a vice chair (private sector);
- Note the appointment of James Speller (Managing Director, Speller Metcalfe) to WLEP Board; and
- Agree next steps and timeline.

#### 3.1 Background

3.1.1 The WLEP Board is comprised of 14 seats as follows:

- **Private Sector – 11**
  - Local Businesses - 8
  - FE Sector – 1
  - HE Sector – 1
  - LEP Executive CEO – 1
- **Public Sector – 3**
  - North Worcestershire Local Authorities – 1
  - South Worcestershire Local Authorities – 1
  - Worcestershire County Council – 1

3.1.2 At present, there is one vacant seat on the WLEP Board. However, some turnover of Non-Executive Directors (NEDs) on the WLEP Board is anticipated in the coming months, due to various personal circumstances including individuals stepping away from their 'primary' working roles. This will be kept under review by the WLEP Executive Team and plans put into place to ensure timely replacement.

3.1.3 There are also five roles associated with the WLEP Board which are attributed to NEDs as follows:

- ***Chair (a local business representative)***
- ***Vice Chair (private sector)***
- Vice Chair (public sector)
- SME Business Champion
- ***Diversity Champion***

3.1.4 At present, WLEP have a requirement to address three of these roles (in bold italics above). Each of these vacancies relate to private sector seats on the WLEP Board. Two of them result from historical decisions taken not to reassign these roles when previous incumbents left the Board, due to the uncertainty surrounding the ongoing (at the time) National LEP Review.

3.1.5 The renewed requirement to identify a permanent Chair more urgently is because Julie Snell, interim Chair, with much regret, has informed the WLEP Executive of her decision to not progress her application for the permanent Chair role. This is due to a newly diagnosed health issue, and so Julie has decided it would not be right for the WLEP or herself to continue with her application. Julie is keen to emphasise that she is committed to the Interim Chair role until the recruitment process is complete.

### 3.2 WLEP Chair role

3.2.1 In April 2022, and considering the WLEP Board's decision taken in January 2022, to maintain local LEP delivery and momentum into 2022/23, the Board approved a recommendation to proceed with a recruitment process for the Chair role.

3.2.2 This process involved an application process managed internally by the WLEP Executive Team, supported by some targeted advertising campaigns in local business and trade publications. Despite a few local conversations with potential applicants, unfortunately, this did not lead to a permanent recruitment.

3.2.3 In July 2022, this outcome was reported back to WLEP Board. In parallel, Julie Snell put herself forward to undertake the role on an interim basis and was unanimously supported by the Board. The Board agreed to review the situation again at the end of the calendar year.

3.2.4 Following discussion with Julie in November 2022, the WLEP Executive are now recommending that the Board commission an external recruitment process to identify and appoint a permanent Chair. A budget up-to £15k is requested to support this exercise, drawing from the Project Development Fund allocation, within the Growing Places Fund.

3.2.5 The WLEP Executive would commission an external Executive Search agency to identify a list of prospective candidates.

3.2.6 It is important to ensure that WLEP continue to have an active WLEP Board chair in role, particularly as we anticipate forthcoming discussions with national Government about the future of LEPs in non-devolution geographies and prepare for our Annual Performance Review.

3.2.7 A proposed timeline is outlined below:

WLEP Board discussion / decision	24 November 2022
Seek quotations from three Executive Search agencies	28 November – 9 December 2022
Appoint Executive Search Agency and hold inception meeting	w/c 12 December
Search and application process underway	w/c 19 December – 15 January
Shortlist of candidates identified	w/c 16 January
Interviews conducted and appointment offer made	w/c 23 January
WLEP Chair in role	Early February 2023

### **3.3 WLEP Vice Chair role**

- 3.3.1 Whilst the permanent Chair role recruitment exercise is undertaken, and considering Julie's personal circumstances, it is imperative that the vice chair (private sector) role is assigned to one of the existing Board members, with immediate effect.
- 3.3.2 This role would identify a Non-Exec Director to, primarily, deputise for Julie in the event she is unable to attend/chair a Board meeting before a permanent Chair is in post.
- 3.3.3 The Vice Chair would also attend WLEP QUAD meetings (generally 2-3 weeks prior to WLEP Board meetings) to discuss and set the agenda for the forthcoming Board meeting, along with the Chair, Vice Chair (public sector) and WLEP CEO.
- 3.3.4 In the lead-up to this Board meeting, the WLEP Executive Team have approached a number of NEDs with a view to gauging their interest and availability to undertake the Vice Chair (private sector) role.
- 3.3.5 The Board are asked to attend the meeting with a view on voting and seconding a NED to the Vice Chair (private sector) role from the local business representative seats on the Board.

### **3.4 Appointment of Non-Exec Director**

- 3.4.1 In addition, the Board are asked to note that James Speller, Managing Director of Speller Metcalfe has successfully applied to join the WLEP Board.
- 3.4.2 James applied as part of the recent internal recruitment campaign, and whilst not seeking the role of the Chair, was interested in joining the WLEP Board, and will bring a wealth of local insight onto the board from a successful local business perspective, as well as the wider construction sector too.
- 3.4.3 James will join the WLEP Board in time for the first meeting in 2023.

### **3.5 Conclusion and Next Steps**

- 3.5.1 Subject to WLEP Board discussion, we will potentially have a plan to resolve two of the three vacant roles referenced in paragraph 3.1.3, at the end of the meeting on 24 November.
- 3.5.2 There will still be one vacant seat from the private sector, local businesses representatives.
- 3.5.3 The Board are asked to consider the strategy for appointing to this vacancy. Options include:
  - Using the external chair process to identify potential candidates
  - Advertise to existing WLEP NEDs serving sub-boards
  - Run a WLEP Executive recruitment exercise using WGH and partners to identify potential candidates
- 3.5.4 Finally, this would leave the Board to assign the vacant role of Diversity champion. The Board are asked to consider whether to assign this role to an existing NED now, or whether to wait until the full complement of NEDs are appointed and seek to assign the role at that point, likely to be in the New Year.

**Luke Willetts**

**Deputy CEO**