Item 5 – Strategic Communications Update

WLEP BOARD RECOMMENDATION

- The WLEP board are asked to review the update on the WLEP conference and the communications and activity updates since the last board meeting.

5.1	**2023 Worcestershire LEP Conference update**	
5.1.1	The WLEP conference event, now branded as 'Worcestershire: The BIG Conversation' has now been officially launched across the business community.	
5.1.2	Speakers have been secured including Nigel Huddleston MP to open the event, and Dr Phininder Balaghan, Innovation and Engagement Lead at Naimuri and Global AI Capability lead for QinetiQ, who will speak around innovation and A.I.	
5.1.3	The agenda for the event has been further developed, sticking with the focus of ensuring there is a two way conversation with businesses to inform future delivery. The updated agenda can be found in the appendix to this report.	
5.1.4	Clear 'ASKS' have been established for the event as a whole, and each individual session to ensure that businesses understand the key takeaways we would like.	
5.1.5	Targeted invites have been issued to SME and large businesses working with the Worcestershire Growth Hub.	
5.1.6	The event has also now been publicly launched with press release and digital marketing activity, which has been picked up by local and regional news organisations including Worcester News Group (Local IQ), The Business Magazine etc.	
5.1.7	Current registration numbers have exceeded the physical capacity limit (**120**) with audience members opting for both the physical and virtual attendance option.	
5.1.8	The audience so far is a split of SME businesses and some larger businesses, with the minority being key partner organisations like the County and District Councils and Further and Higher education providers.	
5.1.9	Further marketing and communications activity is planned over the remaining few weeks to boost registration numbers ahead of the event.	

5.2	**<u>Strategic Communications and Activity Updates</u>**	
5.2.1	Since the last WLEP Board meeting there have been a series of communications updates to make the board aware of.	
5.2.2	BetaDen announced applications were open for their Cohort 8 programme. Applications are open until the 1st March.	
5.2.3	The third event in the Inclusive Worcestershire programme has been delivered with over 40 businesses learning more about developing diverse talent and the benefits it can bring to their business and the community.	
5.2.4	The Inspiring Worcestershire team has launched a new virtual careers education platform for schools. 'Simply Careers' is a new tool that is being rolled out across schools in the county to help students understand the key sectors in the county, the major employers in each sector and the types of job roles they could have.	
5.2.5	In early January, the Worcestershire LEP skills team delivered a joint event with the University of Worcester as part of their Careers Education Enhancement Training for new teachers. Attendees got to learn about the world of careers education to help prepare them in their teaching roles.	
5.2.6	BetaDen working with Midlands Cyber, the LEP and the Growth Hub delivered a networking event for over 50 businesses. The event attracted a broad range of businesses who got to learn more about each team and the upcoming events or activity per team area.	
5.2.7	The Worcestershire Growth Hub continues to be attending a variety of events to engage with local businesses across the county and raise the word on the support on offer.	
5.2.8	The Worcestershire Apprenticeships team has delivered a plethora of activity for National Apprenticeship Week 2024. The focus has been on a mythbusting campaign with local training providers and key employers, helping to answer the common questions that people, carers and employers have around apprenticeships. The activity also featured a new Guardians of the Apprentice Podcast episode, several apprentice case studies, a Worcester News campaign and the launch of the 2024 Worcestershire Apprenticeships Awards.	
5.2.9	The Worcestershire LEP board are asked to outline any additional items they would like to be featured within future strategic communications updates.	

Alex Price
Marketing and Communications Manager

Appendix A – Worcestershire: The BIG Conversation – Agenda and Programme

Aims of the Conference:

- To propose a method for future of business engagement and support, which will gain feedback from the audience and stakeholder, both at the event and post event.
- To instigate meaningful dialogue with attendees both in person and online about key business opportunities and challenges across key topics and subjects – importantly - What can the partnership and growth hub do, that will be valued by the business community and wider partners?
- To deliver an event that promotes two-way communication with attendees across a hybrid delivery approach.
- To create greater awareness on the programmes and projects being delivered and are proposed in the county.

Event Programme:

7:30 to 8:30am – Networking Breakfast

8:30 to 8:45am – Welcome to the event

8:45 to 10am – Session 1: Skills and Training

10 to 10:20am – Networking Break

10:20 to 11:50am – Session 2: Recognising innovation within business

11:50 to 12:10pm – Networking Break

12:10 to 1pm – Session 3: Growing your Business, Growing Worcestershire

1 to 1:15pm – Event conclusions

1:15 to 2pm – Networking Lunch Finish

Worcestershire: The BIG Conversation – Agenda

7.30am to 8:30am – Networking breakfast (optional)

8:30 to 8:45am – Welcome to the event, Paul Walker

Paul to do a brief introduction to the event, outline the structure for the day and then introduce Nigel Huddleston MP to provide an overview of past delivery success and then Paul to return to outline the future of the LEP and launch the latest economic report.

Nigel Huddleston MP

- To comment on the national situation with LEPs, and the value and delivery of the WLEP to date.
- To include a celebration of LEP success, with mention of key projects and the benefit to the county of working together for a successful Worcestershire.
- Support for a partnership approach to capture a co-ordinated business voice to drive forward an economic strategy for the region.

Paul Walker, Chair of the WLEP

- Importance of the partnership work
- Outline of the 2040 vision and strategy with progress so far.
- Launch of the 2024 Worcestershire Economy Report and overview of the current economic conditions and the support for growth of the Worcestershire economy in the next 3-5 years.

8:45am to 10am - Session 1: Skills and Training

Session Objectives:

1. **Raise awareness within the business community on Workforce Planning** Through discussion and activity, help more businesses to recognise why workforce planning can help businesses address their recruitment challenges.
2. **Create an Employer Standards guide** A review of the top 10 voted standards from employers to produce a guide for new entrants.
3. **Announcement and demo of the Workforce Planning Toolkit** A new tool from the LEP and County Council to help employers with their workforce planning. Register your interest in this toolkit, coming soon.)

Introduced by Judy Gibbs Director of Skills WLEP and Carl Arntzen, NED WLEP
Hosted by Gary Woodman CEO WLEP with presenters.

(10 minutes) Scene Setting – Where are we now?

- Carl (script to follow) to provide an overview of the skills work that has been delivered in Worcestershire over the past 5 years.

- Highlight the trends we have been seeing with skills needs in the county.
- Showcase of the key projects and programmes that are being delivered.
    - *WA 10 years*
    - *CEC delivery*
    - *Youth Hub*
    - *Inclusive Worcestershire*

- *(***Discussion**) **What do we think the future provision skills needs will be?** *Interactive piece with audience exploring the data and current programmes, idea is for the audience to come up with and predict the answers.*
- *Areas to cover are; Labour Market update, Low Unemployment to region and national, low wage levels, gone through the vacancy peak, 16-24 remain important, why?)*

(10 minutes) Why is Workforce Planning important?

- *(***Discussion***)* What is Workforce Planning and why is it important, value in completing workforce planning to better secure a business's workforce. *Aim is for the audience to learn this from discussing their challenges and then identify why a workforce plan would help.*
- **(Pre-Poll)** *What are the recruitment challenges employers are facing.*
- **(Survey)** *Who already has a workforce plan?*

(20 minutes) (**Discussion**) **Moving young people into and developing the workforce**

- *Video snippets to be created for the employer case studies within these areas. Employers will also be in the room and be brought on stage to expand on their case studies, SME case studies will be crucial.)*
    - Retention of staff
    - Development of talent
    - Acquisition of talent
    - Employer branding

- **(Pre-poll & Discussion)** *Are young people ready for the world of work?*
- *(***Survey***) Employer Branding, is this affecting your recruitment or retention?*
- (**ASK of Audience**) Drive more employers to get involved with the Inspiring Worcestershire programme to help better prepare young people for the world of work.

(10 minutes) Workforce Planning: Inclusive Worcestershire Leaders Launch

- *What is Inclusive Worcestershire, the series of events delivered so far, and launch the new LEADERS scheme with a handful of employer certificates.*

- *(**Survey**) Are you embracing Inclusive hiring practices?*
- *(**Discussion**) Would you attend a support session to embrace more Inclusive hiring practices and what would help?*

(20 minutes) Development of the Worcestershire employer standards

- *The skills and behaviours that Worcestershire employers require from new entrants to their organisation.*

- ***(Discussion)*** *What is important from a long list of traits provided to the audience?*
- ***(Survey)*** *Rate a long list, voting via platform – discussion from some tables*

- **Conclusions =** *provide us with a list of the 10 most important traits. (From this we can deliver as careers mapping for individuals to achieve those 10 areas.*

(5 minutes) Announcement and demo of the Workforce Planning Toolkit

- *A new tool from the LEP and County Council to help employers with their workforce planning. Register your interest in this toolkit, coming soon.*
- (**ASK of Audience**) Engagement with workforce planning tool when officially launched

10am to 10:20am – Networking break

10:20 to 11:50am - Session 2: Recognising innovation within business

Session Objectives:

1. **Showcase the LEP innovation strategy for the county**
2. **Launch the 'BetaDen Angels Model' and any other innovation support =** Key takeaways for businesses now wanting to be more innovative.

Introduced by Nigel Hall, NED WLEP
Hosted by Gary Woodman CEO WLEP

(**15 Minutes**) **What is Innovation?**

- Nigel to provide an overview of the LEP innovation strategy and scene setting, what have we done so far, what does the data tell us about innovation in the county, explanation of the Talent, Enablers, Finance innovation model.

- **(Survey)** How do you currently innovate?
- (**Discussion and Poll**) Do you have any links with academic institutions?

(20 minutes) The value that Innovation brings – Donston Powell

- A short panel discussion focused on two key principles:
    - 1. Value that Innovation brings to a region & economy
    - 2. How does innovation work, with business examples

- The panel will be hosted and led by Donston Powell from BetaDen who will ask questions to the panel, as well as bringing in business examples from BetaDen alumni and other business innovation case studies in the room. Business examples

will be planted in the audience to keep the interactive feel.

- Eagle Labs have been identified to speak on the innovation at a national level and why it is valuable and how it works. *DP to organise local business examples for the panel discussion.*

- The key focus is for the panel is for businesses to understand the value of innovation, how it can work for them and the benefits that it can bring including boosted productivity, as well as understanding how it is happening in the county.

(45 minutes) Keynote: AI – The Challenge and Opportunity – Dr Phininder Balaghan, Innovation and Engagement Lead at Naimuri and Global AI Capability lead for QinetiQ.

- Dr Balaghan will be covering the themes of Innovation, A.I. and how businesses can get from a Proof of Concept to Production.

(10 minutes) Launch of BetaDen Finance Angels Model and possible further support

- (**ASK of Audience**) Outline the BetaDen Finance Angels Model and how more can get involved.
- Promote any innovation support for businesses.
- Signpost and encourage businesses to sign up to the Worcestershire Innovation Conference in March.

11:50am to 12:10pm – Networking break

12:10 to 1pm – Session 3: Growing your business, growing Worcestershire

Session Objectives:

1. **Raise awareness of Growth Hub and how it can help businesses =** Cover the value proposition for business support and identify with businesses how they can be supported and the direction of travel.
2. **Launch the new business support schemes (Skills Boost & Apprenticeships grant) =** Raise awareness to local businesses of the new support schemes coming and how they can address some of the challenges raised in early sections.

Introduced by Luke Willetts Deputy CEO WLEP and Jenny Long NED WLEP
Hosted by Gary Woodman CEO WLEP

(20 minutes) What is Business Support?

- Jenny to provide an overview of the current business environment in the county with the Worcestershire economic report data.

- *(**Pre-poll and Survey**) What do we think the barriers are to business growth?*

- **(Pre-poll)** *Where do you go for Business Support?*
- *(**Table Breakouts & discussion**) How can business support mitigate these barriers to growth?*

(15 minutes) What is the Worcestershire Growth Hub?

- *(What do we do? How can we help? What can we not do? Why should you engage with us?)*
- *90 second video highlight of WGH Support, featuring a variety of local case studies.*

- *(**Discussion**) Luke to then engage with case study businesses in attendance to share more of their story, focusing on the role of the WGH within their success stories.*

(**10 minutes**) **Future of Business Support in Worcestershire**

- *Explain the Business support landscape / lifecycle, covering each stage of support on offer. (Start-up, high growth etc)*

- *Explain the WGH links to Government for feedback on what works and what doesn't, encourage businesses to keep providing feedback.*

- *(**Survey**) What are the top 3 challenges in your sector?*

- *Launch of new WGH Knowledge Support Hub website pages to provide better resources and intelligence to help businesses across key topic areas.*

- *Launch the new business support schemes and signpost businesses on how to access the new schemes(Skills Boost & Apprenticeships grant).*

- *Encourage businesses to bring more businesses into the Growth Hub network.*

1pm to 1:15pm – Event conclusion

The Partnership is here to stay with the backing from all partners.

Engage with us, keep the conversation going and help us drive Worcestershire forward.

- ***Skills,*** The value of workforce planning, how to do it and the new support to help businesses.

- ***Innovation,*** The value that innovation brings to the economy and businesses, how more businesses can be innovative and the new support to help businesses.

- ***Growing your business,*** How the Growth Hub can support your business and how by engaging with us we can support your business.

1:15pm to 2pm – Networking lunch and close