

## **5. WLEP BUSINESS BOARD REVIEW - IMPLEMENTATION**

### **5.1. Background**

- 5.1.1. At the January 2020 WLEP Board a review of the Business Board was presented to members to create a framework for a revised approach to business engagement across the WLEP area.
- 5.1.2. The capacity constraints within the WLEP Executive team and the current voluntary nature of the Business Board members suggests we need to be more focused on utilising the existing resources available to us, such as Worcestershire Business Central (WBC) Growth Hub, to undertake face-to-face engagement with businesses. Equally, WLEP needs to utilise private sector networks such as the Chamber of Commerce, Circle2Success and #Worcestershirehour to communicate WLEP messages or promote opportunities to consult with the business community.

### **5.2. A WLEP Business Engagement Strategy**

- 5.2.1. The Strategy should capture a **strong, credible and collective business voice for Worcestershire – both within the County and outwards towards the surrounding areas including the Midlands Engine.**
- 5.2.2. An important role of WLEP is to gather information from the business community to enhance, support the implementation and generate new economic strategy ideas, and the adoption of new policies.
- 5.2.3. A strategy will be developed during Q1 2020/21

### **5.3. Agreed approach**

- 5.3.1. Based on utilising our resources efficiently, WLEP proposes to disband the Business Board in its current guise. Instead our proposal is to take the following approach to engage more businesses by:

#### **A) Working with Membership Organisations**

- i) Quarterly joint meetings to ensure a two-way dialogue between WLEP and business membership organisations; these would include the Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Business, Institute of Directors, Circle2Success, CBI, Make UK, the National Union of Farmers and Countryside Land Owners Association.
- ii) The agenda for these meetings would be to gather intelligence from their members on current issues and opportunities and coordinate future topics of intelligence gathering.
- iii) Arrangements are underway to schedule the first of these sessions with partners.

**B) Working with Other Intermediaries**

We will look for partner opportunities to work with banks, accountants, solicitors to gather business intelligence.

**C) Worcestershire Business Central**

- i) Ensure comprehensive access to the intelligence from the business diagnostic that the Business Engagement staff generate when meeting a business for the first time. This will be built in to the 2020/21 WBC business plan.

**D) Local Networks**

- i) There are several networks that are place-based including Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) in Worcester, Kidderminster and Redditch. Local networking groups where WLEP will gather intelligence through surveys or small group meetings. This would be from bodies like the Redditch Business Leaders Board, REWyre etc.

**E) Establish WLEP Business Forums**

- i) WLEP to host 3 forums a year, these would be free for any business to attend and cover a range of topics; they would provide a focus for a large-scale business conversation. The Conference will act as one of these and the other events will be planned in September (N. Worcestershire) / November (S. Worcestershire)

**F) Round tables**

- i) Focused small specific groups to discuss a topic or theme in detail. BetaDen held an innovation dinner in January 2020. One focus on Commercial property will take place in Summer 2020

**5.4. Conclusion**

- 5.4.1. All business board members have been informed of this decision and thanked for their time and efforts.
- 5.4.2. Widening and deepening the conversations with WLEP across this new methodology will see greater engagement and conversations with businesses of all sizes and in numerous business locations.
- 5.4.3. We have allocated a £5k within existing budgets under events to deliver this we would also look to utilising partner resources and gain sponsorship on venues, coworking and sponsorship.

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