



WORCESTERSHIRE LEP BOARD MEETING

Friday 31st March 2023

10:00 – 13:00

Venue: Midland Road Studios, Progress House, Worcester, WR4 9SW

PRESENT

Jennifer Long	JL	Vice Chair- Director, Ice Blue Marketing and Design
Gary Woodman	GW	Chief Executive, Worcestershire LEP
Cllr Simon Geraghty	SiG	Leader of Worcestershire County Council
Carl Arntzen	CA	Managing Director, Worcester Bosch Group
Jane Britton	JB	Director of Communications & Participation University of Worcester
Stuart Laverick	SL	Principal & Chief Executive, Heart of Worcestershire College
James Speller	JS	Managing Director, Speller
Nigel Hall	NH	WLEP NED-Elec
Sue Jordan	SJ	Non-Executive Board Member
Paul Walker	PW	Chair Elect
Jeremy Cielisk	JC	Non-Executive Board Member

IN ATTENDANCE

Luke Willetts	LW	Deputy CEO, Worcestershire LEP
Phoebe Dawson	PD	Director of Business Engagement, Worcestershire LEP
Ian Smith	IS	Assistant Director West Midlands and Department for Business & Trade
Steph Simcox	SS	Head of Finance, Worcestershire County Council
Alex Pearson	AP	Net Zero Projects Manager, Midlands Net Zero Hub
Alison Dickinson	AD	WLEP Project Manager
Ian Edwards	IE	Head of Economy and Environment MHDC and Wychavon DC
Kerry Mashford	KeM	WLEP NED with responsibility for Energy Strategy

APOLOGIES

John Dillon	JD	Managing Director, GJS Dillon
Cllr Tom Wells	TW	Leader of Malvern Hills District Council
Cllr Karen May	KM	Leader of Bromsgrove District Council



1.	<u>Item 3 - Appointment of the WLEP Chair:</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
1.1	PW and NH recused themselves for the first part of this item. LW recapped the recruitment process for a new WLEP Chair. WLEP appointed Faerfield to assist as external recruitment support, producing a positive field of potential Chairs. Interviews conducted on 9 th and 10 th March.	
1.2	LW covered statistics on the recruitment process: this included 6 final applicants, with one withdrawal on the day, who despite this expressed interested in getting involved with WLEP in the future. LW highlighted that the diversity of the field was disappointing, no female or BAME applications, despite further 6 male and 4 female individuals who considered role.	
1.3	JL gave summary on the interview process: SiG noted that the interview panel quickly came to a unanimous decision, which supported the goal of hiring a uniting figure.	
1.4	JL confirmed there were no objections. Paul Walker was duly appointed the WLEP Chair and Nigel Hall accepted an offer to join the Board as a private sector member, filling the final vacancy on the Board.	
1.5	SJ queried the need for background/political checks given the context of public appointments and suggested as good practice. LW confirmed these are happening in the background and we would consider including background and political checks during the onboarding process.	LW
1.6	JL formally welcomed NH and PW back into the room and onto the Board.	
1.7	LW covered potential recommendations following appointment of a new Chair: A small Task and Finish group to cover diversity in future recruitment. Proposal for NH to perform this role given his background – recommendations for planning and LEP generally. Board and NH agreed. SJ offered to join task group.	GW
1.8	<u>ACTIONS:</u> LW complete background checks as part of onboarding process. GW co-ordinate organisation of Task and Finish group.	LW/GW
2.	<u>Welcome and Apologies</u>	
2.1	JL agreed to chair today's meeting to bridge the appointment of the new Chair and welcomed the Board to the meeting.	
2.2	Newly appointed Chair formally introduced. PW introduced himself and his business background. Thanked Board for the opportunity to get involved and highlighted his role as enabling and supporting wherever able.	
2.3	NH thanked Board for opportunity to join the LEP. Highlighted passion for innovation and supporting underrepresented groups. Rest of the Board made introductions and welcomes. ACTION: PW organise introductory meetings with individual Board members.	PW
3.	<u>Declarations of Interest.</u>	



3.1	JL asked the Board if there were any declarations of interest. PD highlighted Declaration of Interest as she serves as a NED on the WCCC Foundation Board in relation to Item 7.	
4.	<u>Minutes of WLEP Board Meeting on 03rd February 2023</u>	
4.1	GW covered Items relating to government and funding announcement. Confirmed WLEP still receiving communications regarding topic.	
4.2	End of year accounts means that a full finance report comes to the May Board. LW suggested a Board away day to cover any potential changes, with individuals joining and leaving the Board and alterations to WLEP executive team suggested a date of 23rd June.	
4.3	The previous meeting minutes were agreed as a correct record and all actions completed from February meeting.	
4.4	ACTIONS: Arrange next steps in organisation of Board away day and accompanying agenda topics.	GW
5.	<u>Item 4 Energy Strategy and LAEP</u>	
5.1	LW gave introduction and summarised last Board meeting approval for funding towards River Severn network.	
5.2	KeM covered LAEPs purpose and highlighted dependence on data: need to maintain this information but LAEP's are not funded by Govt. Many combined and municipal authorities are completing this, but there is need to continuously update this work to remain up to date. Summarised that across the county more co-ordinated working is needed to provide a managed response to the question of energy.	
5.3	AD reviewed ESC 7 stage process and defined the scope of the LAEP: Worcestershire's aim is to cover the baseline current energy system in relation to planned/proposed/growth development. The current actions have been largely 'pre-LAEP'..	
5.4	WLEP established LAEP group from July 2022 and have since engaged with network operators, county council and local planning authorities to better understand the whole energy system and engage with other sites. Agreed to share data to understand projections, capacity/constraint and collaborate on development, working with WCC data team to map these sites.	
5.5	KeM identified barrier in that current maps developed are static, which cannot account for continuously changing data. Suggested that any potential funding be used to develop dynamic maps so experts can sit alongside planners/developments to establish opportunities, off gas grid locations, underperforming homes, overlay fuel poverty data. Help focus opportunities from a Business and Energy perspective.	
5.6	Currently speaking to private suppliers individually, but next steps include co-ordinating with those who want to develop energy provision in the area, offering business and supply side opportunities.	



5.7	KeM confirmed there is no incoming local hydrogen for 10 years, whilst strategic development sites are constrained by gas and need reinforcement, which will take several years. Strategic and development planning are therefore both key enablers and potential blockers, and KeM added that the County is further restricted by conservation areas and historic buildings.	
5.8	AD reviewed comparisons between known county employment and housing development sites, planning status and energy network constraints. (for example, it is not sensible to reinforce gas grids because this will become a constraint for electricity in future.)	
5.9	KeM covered examples of Malvern Hills and Wychavon situations for growth and development. More than half of the development sites were experiencing constraints, with a high proportion of low performance homes that need upgrading in both districts. Highlighted within this is the need to compare conservation areas against low performing areas and consider how to combat this constraint.	
5.10	KeM covered recommendations to the Board: Focus on NetZero needs to be brought into strategic and individual planning processes. Queried what the LEP's role moving forward, and the need for continuous governance of LAEPs.	
5.11	KeM promoted need for energy enforced digital twin of Worcestershire and task to find best areas to focus within to find results first. Covered opportunities for funding to develop digital tools, but will not secure funding for LAEP across Worcestershire. Suggests focusing on a more granular level to avoid constraining development.	
5.12	SiG highlighted importance of this Item, suggested LEP's role to assist in core piece of work to challenge these static constraints and noted the need for county and districts to co-ordinate together, with County-wide level resource.	
5.13	SL highlighted that growth area for students in North moves out of Worcestershire, so need to work across county boundaries too, especially given divisions of energy systems.	
5.14	JB and JL queried resources needed to make dynamic map. AP highlighted other LEPs are looking at this and everyone reaching the same issues. Possible software is available, with £50,000 - £150,000 estimate to get this completed. JL introduced idea of creating the tech to sell to other regions to help fund the work and suggested a resourcing piece to establish possibilities.	
5.15	CA noted the need to consider area planning in coming years and find a decision from central government before we finalise energy planning in the region.	
5.16	JC mentioned support needed for businesses, but all their work based on cost effective benefit analysis, so suggested looking at different policies/legislation which needs to come in to allow businesses/industrialists to make changes. JC suggested something tangible to aim towards. AP agreed that this LAEP is the first step toward that vision.	
5.17	KeM proposed immediate steps to take: socialise information already gathered and gauge response , offer support to current actions so over next year we are taking advantage of information. SiG confirmed to take this back internally to council.	LW SiG



5.18	<p>ACTIONS: The Board agreed this was a valuable piece of work. Board suggested Exec team to quantify the resource ask for LAEP and work out how to socialise this with stakeholders. Recognition by the Board that this work may sit better with a different partner but need to plan for a more dynamic tool and build a plan of outputs and outcome in order to action the findings of the mapping.</p>	GW/LW
6.	<p><u>Item 5 - Chancellors Budget Statement:</u></p> <p>6.1 LW covered context and chronology of Chancellors statement: Govt minded that LEP functions should be delivered by local government. Minded to withdraw core funding support for LEPs from April 2024 pending consultation.</p> <p>6.2 LW and Exec Team meeting with National LEP networks and PR release during this process. LEP network covered thematic discussions starting w/c 4th April.</p> <p>6.3 LW summarised data collection process through a questionnaire, implication of removal of LEPs on national level for businesses to completed with 14th April deadline. LW confirmed that funding for the year has been finalised at £250k.</p> <p>6.4 Open conversation with Board regarding WLEP position and focus. LW recapped last meetings decisions: Board committed to support WLEP through transitional period, budget building for coming years. Return in May with budget to sign off.</p> <p>6.5 PW suggested review of Strategy Document 2021 to confirm priorities still make sense compared to 2-year plans and examine what key priorities in the short term to enable creation of a delivery plan.</p> <p>6.6 SJ also suggested clear requirements on stakeholder engagement and communication. Ensure that local communication mirrors/complies with National LEP.</p> <p>6.7 SJ covered need to ensure that LEP is providing support to business concerns around skills shortages. In order to transition this successfully into local authorities: consideration of the impact of this change needs to be examined/altered in detail.</p> <p>6.8 JL agreed need for comms for businesses to ensure forward momentum. PW echoed the need to own the 'brand' LEP – ensure that there is still opportunity for business community to see this brand as conduit for development/growth.</p> <p>6.9 IE commented that Districts had shown commitment to Growth Hub and Betaden through UK Shared Prosperity Fund and are keen to be engaged in the debate on the future of the partnership. GW responded that post-May elections would be an important time to engage with Leaders and CEOs.</p> <p>6.10 ACTIONS: LW confirmed comms piece is key now that there are fluctuations in the national LEP work. JL suggested this as agenda for Board away day including funding models. PW suggested review of Strategy Document to support development of 2 year delivery plan</p>	LW
7.	<p><u>Item 6 - WLEP Economy Report 2023 – LW</u></p> <p>7.1 LW covered headlines and positive feedback from businesses last year. Examined Worcestershire economy against the Plan for Growth, captures largely positive</p>	



	<p>performance against strategic KPIs. Evidence collected provides strategic and long-term objectives, now need for a practical delivery plan.</p> <p>The Board to use this document as an input to inform discussion on WLEP priorities at away day session.</p>	
8.	<p><u>Item 7 - WCCC – Moving loan to Social Value Contract</u></p> <p>8.1 SS and GW liaised with WCCC regarding Social Value Contract which will support businesses, county, district councils, schools, education, the vulnerable.</p> <p>8.2 SS proposed that Social Value Contract will invest in Worcestershire for the next 5-6 years. Prospectus available, propose that County will work on this with District partners to come up with a suite of things we can publicise for people/businesses/county/districts to use.</p> <p>8.3 Once legal agreement is completed, the offer can be published. SS highlighted advantage to young people, the vulnerable having access to sport, facilities, opportunities.</p> <p>8.4 SS requested formal delegation and approval from LEP Board. PW queried benefit of this social value to the WCCC as a business. SS confirmed they are selling spare capacity – e.g., match day seats are not at full capacity. Opportunity costs considered; it is still a viable business alongside this work.</p> <p>8.5 SJ registered concern of losing funding from the LEP and not seeing the value back to impact the budget position.</p> <p>8.6 SiG responded that this should have been a grant, not a loan originally. SiG highlighted not a business in a commercial position, it is a county cricket community space. Highlighted need to make what Contract is asking for is viable and won't put business in jeopardy given recent losses.</p> <p>8.7 SJ queried reduction of loan to minimise loss, SS responded that WCCC has been paying interest on loan to avoid going into default and prospective interest originally received on loan has been added to the Social Value Contract – £1.4m instead of £1.2m.</p> <p>8.8 ACTIONS: Board formally approves LEP consent to terminate loan agreement and establish social value contract. Formally delegate county officers and Executive of LEP responsibility to make this happen.</p>	SS/GW
9.	<p><u>Item 8- LGF Dashboard – Report</u></p> <p>9.1 LW covered overview of key metrics and outlooks for homes and learners using 21/22 data set.</p> <p>9.2 LW gave an overview of performance, housing outputs coming through slower than expected in terms of forecast. Numbers of delivery is the same, but will realise benefits beyond the Govt reporting time frame of March 2025.</p> <p>9.3 Jobs also delivering beyond 2025 reporting milestone, whilst some such as Worcester Six have reduced forecasts of job delivery. Positive picture for apprenticeships and new learners – performance outstripping forecasts with more cohorts going through than capital forecasts.</p>	



9.4	The Cost per Job analysis is also favourable, with many low cost-per-job interventions. Plan is to produce this report annually for Board, 22/23 data will be reported to Board in Summer 2023.	
9.5	SJ highlighted this as useful info for comms in terms of skills. SL highlighted issue that lots of training happening but lots dropping out due to demographic shift. New training doesn't replace to the same extent.	
9.6	SiG suggested comms as a future agenda at every Board meeting. NH and JL agreed. SiG proposed a Comms conference to engage businesses and understand needs to inform LEP future focuses, SL agreed in relation to the LSIP agenda.	SiG
9.7	JS added that during Leaders Lunch, commercial space was highlighted as in demand. Businesses required to invest and expand, without provision for this there is risk of bleeding reinvestment outside of Worcestershire. Need for co-ordinated county wide response.	
9.8	ACTIONS: JL suggested bringing Commercial Property back onto the agenda, GW confirmed. SiG highlighted need to report on other LEP business – suggested inclusion on the Board away day. Add Comms as standing agenda item	LW/GW LW/GW
10.	<u>AOB</u>	
10.1	LW updated that WLEP cannot formally communicate outcome of Annual Performance Review, until these are formally published by Govt.	
10.2	SiG formally thanked JL for her work chairing the Board on an interim basis over the last few months, given the recent changes. PW called for Board to support the decision for JL to stay in her position of Vice-Chair. Board agreed.	
10.3	It was both SL and PD last Board meetings; both were thanked for their contribution to the LEP.	
10.4	JL concluded the meeting and no AOB raised.	
11.	<u>Dates for 2023 –</u> 26 May 2023 10:00 – 13:00 23 June 2023 Suggested Board Away Day 14 July 2023 10:00 – 13:00 06 October 2023 10:00 – 13:00 01 December 2023 10:00 – 13:00 26 January 2024 10:00 – 13:00	