Worcestershire
Local Enterprise Partnership

WORCESTERSHIRE LEP BOARD MEETING

Friday 17th May 2024
10:00 – 13:00
Venue: Kidderminster College, Market Street, Kidderminster, DY10 1LX.

PRESENT:

Paul Walker	(PW)	Chair Worcestershire LEP
Jennifer Long	(JL)	Vice Chair- Director, Ice Blue Marketing and Design
Gary Woodman	(GW)	Chief Executive, Worcestershire LEP
Cllr Simon Geraghty	(SiG)	Leader of WCC and Cabinet Member for Finance
Jeremy Cielisk	(JC)	Non-Executive Board Member
Cat Lewis	(CL)	Principal, Kidderminster College.
Jane Britton	(JB)	Director of Communications & Participation, University of Worcester
James Speller	(JS)	Managing Director, Speller Metcalfe
John Dillon	(JD)	Managing Director, GJS Dillon
Carl Arntzen	(CA)	Managing Director, Worcester Bosch Group
Cllr Dan Morehead	(DM)	Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning & the Green Agenda (Rep for N Districts)
Sue Jordan	(SJ)	Non-Executive Board Member (ONLINE)
Cllr Beverley Neilson	(BN)	Cabinet Member for Economy (rep for the S Districts)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Luke Willetts	(LW)	Deputy CEO, Worcestershire LEP
Alex Price	(AP)	Communications & PR Manager, Worcestershire LEP
Steph Simcox	(SS)	Head of Finance, Worcestershire County Council
David Blake	(DB)	Managing Director of Worcester City Council (Cex Rep) (ONLINE)
Helena Augousti	(HA)	Executive Assistant, Worcestershire LEP
Govin Aujla	(GA)	Area Lead, DBT (ONLINE)
Colin Bates	(CB)	Procurement Lead, Worcestershire County Council

APOLOGIES:

Nigel Hall	(NH)	The Digital Consigliere

1.	**Welcome and Apologies**	**ACTION**
1.1	**PW** welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked for any new declarations of interest.	
1.2	No new interests declared.	
1.3	PW thanked CL for hosting the board meeting and offering Board members a tour of the College post-meeting. Also thanked CL for her services to the LEP Board, acknowledging this was her last meeting before handing over FE representative seat to Michelle Dowse, (HoW College) from next meeting. GW advised LEP Board	

	will extend an invitation to CL to attend LEP Board meetings in future where it makes sense to seek contribution/input on agenda.	
2. 2.1	**<u>Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising</u>** Matters Arising: None. The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record.	
3. 3.1 3.2 3.3	**<u>Q4 2023/2024 Outturn Report:</u>** **SS** updates the board on the Year end position of the Worcestershire LEP. Main headlines being: • A positive year end. • Some planned activity has carried over into 24/25 – the money has been moved for this. • Overheads were down. • The new financial year, there are increased reserves. **SS** finished by thanking **GW** & **LW** for their impact on the positive year end. The board approved all recommendations in the report.	

4.
 	
4.1
	<u>2024/2025 Budget Setting Approval</u>:
	
	LW outlines the proposed budget for 24/25 and items that are in it.
	
	Main headlines being:
	• Positive news in setting a balanced budget for 24/25 and achieving requirement of WLEP Board to maintain operations until end of 24/25 as a minimum.
	• Core funding grants confirmed from DBT.
	  ○ LEP Responsibilities £234k.
	  ○ WGH £261k.
	• WGH funding the same as last year.
	• LEP funding down from last year.
	• There are now circa 10 income streams making up LEP budget, which increase complexity and reduces financial freedom due to ring-fenced nature of funding streams:
	  ○ UKSPF.
	  ○ KAM – DBT.
	  ○ Growing Places.
	  ○ Eagle Lab – BetaDen Incubate.
	• Gets WLEP to March 25, with reserves could potentially go beyond this.	

4.2	The meeting was then opened for questions.	
4.3	**SG** commented that we need to think about the future beyond March 2025, he proposed we think about extending to March 2026, this will help keep good staff and see the county through the elections (national and local).	
4.4	**BN** agreed with this and commented on the district's behalf, that they would also agree as circa 50% of the funding is now UKSPF, the districts need a conversation about their agenda's going forward. PW agreed that engagement with the district agendas was needed to coordinate with the WLEP agenda.	
4.5	**SG** commented further that there needs to be a balance between funding contracted outcomes and delivering against local priorities.	
4.6	**JC** then asked if there was a way to get intelligence from the geographies without a LEP to have a better understanding what they are doing.	
4.7	**JL** followed up JC's comment, that from a business POV, where there isn't a LEP/GH it seems to be disjointed, no leads, no information for businesses etc. **PW** then finished this board item, by commenting that in the 3 key foundations of the WLEP – Business Environment, Innovation and Skills, we are making good progress. This will be the WLEP's legacy.	
4.8	The Board approved the Budget for 2024/25.	
	<u>Social Contract update and naming sponsorship</u> Before agenda item 5, **CB** was asked to update the board on the social value contract in place with WCCC. **CB** presented to the board. The meeting was then opened to questions. **SS** commented to the board, that the contract is for 4 years, but should the value not be met in that time, there is the option to extend for a further year. Also, that the relationship with the club, now feels like a partnership and that the partnership and work being carried out will only help the Worcestershire brand and is ethical. The partnership is encouraging people from outside of Worcestershire into the city etc. **SS** also thanked **CB** for taking the contract and working hard to create the partnership. This led the board to discuss the naming rights of the stadium.	

	GW posed the question of which brand should be used, Visit Worcestershire as it's a tourism brand and will be seen on tv coverage etc. **CB** informed the board that it is a 2-year deal and suggested name is: Visit Worcestershire New Road. **CA** asked if the flooding issue at the stadium is being addressed. **JS** followed this up with an observation that it might not be good for the brand if the stadium is flooded, especially as other sporting venues such as Pitchcroft are also flooded at the same time. **JS** wondered if this issue needed addressing first and if we know the loss of revenue to businesses due to flooding. **GW** replied that talks are already taking place around this issue. **PW** sought approval from Board on naming rights. Board agreed to proposal of Visit Worcestershire for 2 years. This will stimulate interest in the market in 2 years' time once renewal date comes up. **ACTION**: Report on the loss of revenue to local businesses due to flooding.	**GW & CB.**
5.	**Strategic Communications Report**	
5.1	**AP** presents his update to the Board. The meeting is then opened to questions.	
5.2	**GW** started by posing the question 'are we doing a conference in 24/25?'	
5.3	**DM** suggested the conference be in a Roadshow format, moving around the county in the 6 districts, instead of one big event. Asking the businesses local to that district the questions that we want to ask.	
5.4	**CL** asked if there was an impact report from the 23/24 conference, giving information on how we answered the issues/questions raised by the attendees.	
5.5	**JD** suggested that the conference and the LEP focus on attracting and engaging new businesses and so the LEP needs to think about how they do this.	
5.6	**BN** suggested that there needed to be more local engagement and focus on skills for business growth, the LEP needs to be able to meet these needs and therefore asked if there were possible links with the WG~~F~~H for this.	
5.7	**JB** then discussed that there was a different way of looking at this, the roadshow is a good idea, but 1 'firework' event would cut through the many	

5.8 5.9	smaller events that businesses get invited to, with some showcase speakers etc. **JL** commented that the 23/34 conference communicated the message that the WLEP is still here, but we now need to carry that on. **JL** also discussed the need for a strong speaker and suggested that maybe we be more strategic with who we invite to the 24/25 conference. **SG** commented that WLEP can possibly do both, the roundtables in local areas, which will then inform the thinking, topics and speakers for a bigger conference. **ACTION**: Bring a plan to the next Board Meeting.	**AP & GW.**
	Microsoft Academy. Before moving on to Agenda Item 6. **JL** was asked to give a brief update on the Microsoft Academy. **JL** updated the board, main points being: • CL gave JL an excellent contact in Rob Whath (spelling?) to discuss the project. • There are links with local FE's already. • Has contacted Alan Crawford at Microsoft regarding AI upskilling fund. • Moving it forward.	
6.1 6.2 6.3 6.4	**WGH Performance report 2023/2024** **LW** presents to the board. During the presentation, the following comments and discussions occurred. **PW** commented that there was a lot of quantitative data, but there also needs to be qualitative data and that we might need to be strategic, about who we talk to, to help achieve the LEP's outcomes. **JD** having just been through the Worcestershire Growth Hub (WGH) process, says it was great, but is worried that there might still be an element of a postcode lottery to support and funding. Noting that it should be county wide. After the presentation, the meeting was opened up to a discussion around 'What questions do you want the WGH to ask' and 'Are we therefore asking the right questions now'. **PW** asked where's the value in collecting this data, the WGH spend a lot of time producing reports, but why?	

6.5	**SG** noted that while the WGH are delivering funding outcomes, there needs to be a discussion about the WGH is about, are they supporting the scale up of local businesses. There is additional funding from Growing Places, could this be used to add resource. This can be deployed at the Board's discretion but needs to be done now.	
6.6	**JC** suggested a sub-group board to discuss this in a focussed way.	
6.7	**DB** made the point that to secure the UKSPF funding in the first place, the LA's fill out a spreadsheet with achievable outcomes, the money is then awarded on this basis. So, the outcomes and subsequent reporting is driven by the pressure of government to secure the money.	
6.8	**CA** commented that, WGH support businesses and then don't seem to follow up on the outcomes, therefore there is no learning process. **GW** answered that there is, but it's a small time frame. **LW** added that WGH will refer businesses to other programmes and therefore other delivery partners will then capture this data.	
6.9	**JL** suggested using technology to hit as many businesses as possible, an intelligence engine could be built within the WLEP. We know some of the issues facing local businesses, commercial space, funding, skills etc, so is what the WGH currently delivering addressing these issues, are businesses getting value from WGH.	
6.10	**CL** pointed out that there could be more engagement with the LSIP agenda in FE's, that they are engaging with thousands of businesses, and this is a resource that the WGH could use. Business lists were then passed to the board.	
6.11	A discussion followed regarding the future direction of the WGH. This was stopped due to time constraints but will be picked up in subgroup meeting. **Action**: Create a subgroup and book a meeting time.	**HA**
	LEP Delivery Plan	
7.1	**GW** reminded the Board, that one of the requirements on the LEP Core money to the County Council, was the condition to publish an economic strategy.	
7.2	The WLEP already have the Plan for Growth, however we want to have a clear delivery plan for the next 3/5 years.	
7.3	**SG** commented, we need a plan ready for the next government.	

7.4	**PW** supported this approach, and suggested working through what is required for the growth and increasing jobs in the county.	
	AOB None.	
	Dates of Next meeting **12 July 2024 10:00 – 13:00** **20 Sept 2024 10:00 – 13:00** **29 Nov 2024 10:00 – 13:00**	