WORCESTERSHIRE LEP BOARD MEETING

Thursday 7th August
10:00 – 13:00
Venue: Ice Blue, 6 Church Street, Kidderminster, DY10 2AD.

PRESENT:

Jennifer Long	(JL)	Vice Chair- Director, Ice Blue Marketing and Design
Gary Woodman	(GW)	Chief Executive, Worcestershire LEP
Michelle Dowse	(MD)	Principal, Heart of Worcestershire College.
John Dillon	(JD)	Managing Director, GJS Dillon
Carl Arntzen	(CA)	Managing Director, Worcester Bosch Group
Jeremy Cieslik	(JC)	Non-Executive Board Member
Cllr Karen May	(KM)	Rep for NW Districts
Cllr John Gallagher	(JG)	Rep for SW Districts

IN ATTENDANCE:

Luke Willetts	(LW)	Deputy CEO, Worcestershire LEP
Alex Price	(AP)	Communications & PR Manager, Worcestershire LEP
Judy Gibbs	(JG)	Director of Skills, LEP (ONLINE)
Darren Schrouder	(DS)	Worcestershire Growth Hub Manager
Kate Snell	(KS)	BetaDen Programme Manager
Helena Augousti	(HA)	WLEP
David Blake	(DB)	Managing Director of Worcester City Council (Cex Rep) (ONLINE)

APOLOGIES:

Steph Simcox	(SS)	Deputy Chief Financial Officer, Worcestershire County Council
Cllr Sharon Harvey	(SH)	Rep for N Districts
Alex Collins	(AC)	Area Lead, DBT
Jane Britton	(JB)	Pro Vice Chancellor of Communications and External Affairs at the University of Worcester
Paul Walker	(PW)	Chair Worcestershire LEP
Nigel Hall	(NH)	Chair/Lead for WLEP Innovation Board
James Speller	(JS)	Managing Director, Speller Metcalfe
Sue Jordan	(SJ)	Non-Executive Board Member
Cllr Beverley Nielsen	(BN)	Rep for SW Districts
Cllr Alan Amos	(AA)	Rep for Worcestershire County Council

1.	**Welcome and Apologies**	**ACTION**
1.1	**JL** welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were given.	
1.2	**JL** asked for any new declarations of interest. No new interests declared.	
2.	**Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising**	
2.1	Point of accuracy picked up – David Blake listed in apologies list for May meeting minutes in error. To be corrected in final version.	**HA**
2.2	Actions from previous meeting: Budget Update: Cllr Alan Amos (**AA**) is being briefed on the WLEP and has been appointed as the WLEP Board representative for the County Council.	
2.3	**KM**, **JG** and **DB** asked about County Council's level of support for WLEP following local elections. And raised concerns particularly in context of lack of national clarity re: UKSPF continuation post-March 2026 and the future of the projects that UKSPF currently funds. A discussion then takes place, highlights being: • From a business point of view, poor economic performance must be a local priority. • Consider extraordinary WLEP session to lobby on impact of reduced/no future UKSPF funding to local MPs and central government. • Suggestion of inviting local MPs to WLEP Board Meetings to hear directly from local business perspective to understand local case • Who is the voice of Worcestershire in the absence of a Mayoral model? • The worry about lack of UKSPF successor was raised in a national meeting with Alex Norris MP (Small Business Minister) and the negative impact this will have – WLEP have lobbied nationally via the national Business Board Network • There needs to be a push to getting our case across to our local political leadership, who can then push it further up to central government. • Jobs creation is key – can't just be about housing	

2.4	Board Membership: **SJ** and **JD** have had their extension letters.	
2.5	The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record. ACTION: Develop strong case for continued investment into Worcestershire (including impact if not achieved) and invite local MPs to a future/extraordinary WLEP Board Meeting to discuss	**GW/LW**
3.	**<u>Central Government Update</u>**.	**<u>ACTION</u>**
3.1	**LW** presented to the Board. The meeting was then opened to questions.	
3.2	There was a discussion on the IS-8 sectors from the Industrial Strategy, which are eight high-growth sectors that the government has prioritised for economic development and investment. Main headlines being: • The mapping across the national frontier industries ('sub-sectors') will be done this month to understand Worcestershire business base concentrations • Noted that Construction isn't in the IS-8's but the Government wants more houses to be built – however there is some reference to construction as an enabling sector • Mention of Robotics being across most of the IS-8 sectors but could be a standalone sector and maybe Worcestershire can specialise in these skills. • The skills agenda will continue to focus on the IS-8 sectors. **<u>Action</u>**: **MD** to share her contacts within WMCA with **JG**.	**MD**
4.	**<u>Worcestershire Growth Hub (WGH) update:</u>**	**<u>ACTION</u>**
4.1	**DS** presented to the Board. The meeting was then opened to questions.	
4.2	A question was asked how the job creation targets are defined. Direct involvement with the company is one of definitions, jobs must be sustainable for 12 months (minimum) and be based in the UK.	
4.3	A question was asked on how the Professional Business Advisor (PBA) programme will be funded once UKSPF stops. The central government core grant funding for the WGH did increase this year, so will be reviewed to ensure it fits with the local business need, whilst also proactively linking these needs with other	

	departments or projects to identify synergies in delivery model e.g. Skills.	
4.4	A question was asked about how the WGH measure their aim of achieving Economic Growth.	
4.5	The impact is measured, but the current 12-month cycle means the evaluation is done post-12 months. It was then suggested that the WGH needs a 3-year strategy to guide the direction and enable impact to be better measured and understood. Impact vs activity.	
5	**<u>BetaDen Update.</u>**	**<u>ACTION</u>**
5.1	**KS** presented to the Board. The meeting was then opened to questions.	
5.2	There was a discussion around the future model of BetaDen.	
5.3	Headlines being: • Suggested that maybe the model includes taking a % of future revenue for cohort businesses – current intelligence suggests this would reduce number of applicants, and may be at odds with best outcome for the business • Additional products have been considered such as Marketing Courses etc, these would be charged for. • Current cohorts become alumni once they finish the programme, maybe there could be more engagement going forward. • Possibility of soft-landing packages (for inward investment) through the WGH. • Suggested that maybe the investment from BetaDen is paid back once cohort companies hit certain milestones. <u>**Action**</u>: **KS** to continue financial modelling with Accountable Body and bring back BetaDen 3-year Business Plan to WLEP Board in Autumn.	**KS**
6	**<u>Marketing and Communications Update.</u>**	**<u>ACTION</u>**
6.1	Item deferred to next meeting, due to shortage of time.	
7	**<u>AOB</u>** 1. David Blake requested LEP Board considered extending invitations for WLEP Board meetings to all District Council (including City and Borough) Leaders, as it's a good way to collaborate and share views. This will be more increasingly important over the next 18 months with national devolution context. 2. It was suggested that District leaders come together and lobby the government regarding UKSPF continuation.	**ACTION** **GW/LW/Chair**

	3. David Blake referenced Knight Frank national report on retail centres – with Worcester city ranking 66th/200 in UK. **<u>Actions decided</u>:** **1.** Letter to be drafted from Districts & WLEP Board to central government regarding UKSPF.	**DB/LW**
	Dates of Next meeting 2025: 26th September – 10am – 1pm. Venue: Heart of Worcestershire College (Worcester Campus) 28th November – 10am – 1pm. Venue: Thorlux Lighting (Redditch)	