**WORCESTERSHIRE LEP BOARD MEETING**

**Friday 12th July 2024**
**10:00 – 13:00**
**Venue: Heart of Worcestershire College, Redditch, B98 8DW.**

**PRESENT:**

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| 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 |
| Michelle Dowse | (MD) | Principal, Heart of Worcestershire College. |
| John Dillon | (JD) | Managing Director, GJS Dillon |
| Carl Arntzen | (CA) | Managing Director, Worcester Bosch Group |
| Cllr Karen May | (KM) | Leader of Bromsgrove District Council (Rep for N Districts) |
| Cllr Julie Wood | (JW) | Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning, Economic Development and Tourism (Rep for the S Districts) (ONLINE) |
| Nigel Hall | (NH) | The Digital Consigliere |

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

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| Luke Willetts | (LW) | Deputy CEO, Worcestershire LEP |
| Alex Price | (AP) | Communications & PR Manager, Worcestershire LEP |
| David Blake | (DB) | Managing Director of Worcester City Council (Cex Rep) |
| Helena Augousti | (HA) | Executive Assistant, Worcestershire LEP |
| Govin Aujla | (GA) | Area Lead, DBT |
| Kate Snell | (KS) | Programme Manager BetaDen. |
| Judy Gibbs | (JG) | Director of Skills, LEP |

**APOLOGIES:**

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| James Speller | (JS) | Managing Director, Speller Metcalfe |
| Sue Jordan | (SJ) | Non-Executive Board Member |
| Steph Simcox | (SS) | Head of Finance, Worcestershire County Council |
| Jane Britton | (JB) | Director of Communications & Participation, University of Worcester |

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| **1.** | **Welcome and Apologies** | **ACTION** |
| 1.1 | **PW** welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the new members of the board. | |
| 1.2 | **PW** asked for any new declarations of interest. | |
| 1.3 | No new interests declared. | |

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| | **PW** thanked **MD** for hosting the board meeting and offering Board members a tour of the Careers Hub post-meeting. | |
| **2.** | **Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising** | |
| 2.1 | Matters Arising: Situation with Worcestershire County Cricket Club was raised by **SG**. | |
| 2.2 | **SG** confirmed that Worcester City Council, Worcestershire County Council and Ashley Giles (WCCC CEO) were communicating about the support needed and City & County Councils were aiding in engaging with agencies such as the Environment Agency. | |
| 2.3 | **DB** added that communications had started with Worcester's new MP Tom Collins.<br><br>The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record. | |
| **3.** | **Strategic Communications Report:** | |
| 3.1 | **AP** presented to the Board.<br><br>The meeting was opened to comments and questions. | |
| 3.2 | **GW** added that there is intelligence that can be built into the Board reports that **AP** collates, can be done monthly instead. | |
| 3.3 | **GW** continued that the team are currently looking at speakers – on themes such as AI etc for the Conference and commented that looking at the Events Calendar shared by AP, there isn't much room for the suggested smaller events, and we also have to be aware of partners and stakeholder events – avoid event fatigue for businesses. | |
| 3.4 | **GA** commented that it's important to capture the voice of local business, this can then be passed to Central Government. | |
| 3.5 | **NH** commented that he believes that the Innovation agenda doesn't seem to be a priority in the events programme and that it needs its own activity strand.<br>**AP** answered that one of the Strategic Events can be focused around Innovation agenda. | |
| 3.6 | **PW** commented that the events could be led by the Board's WGH strategy, the events calendar can then be activity led rather than intelligence led. | |
| 3.7 | **LW** commented that the WGH have been challenged to try their own schedule of events in 24/25, based on topics that local businesses want to know about e.g. upcoming Finance event. This helps to hit UKSPF targets but also adds value and quality for the attending businesses. | |

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| 3.8 | **JG** commented that these events are needed to promote and engage on new tools such as the Skills Workforce Planning tool. | |
| 3.9 | **LW** confirmed that to gain further Business Intelligence the Business Representative Organisations (BRO's) are also supporting the monthly reports to central government, by providing insights. | |
| 3.10 | **JL** suggested a possible 'Think Tank' approach on how to inspire women and girls to enter the Tech and STEM sectors. | |
| 3.11 | **JD** commented that we need to be aware with locations of events, of a geographical split between North Worcestershire and South Worcestershire and making sure that North Worcestershire is equally represented. | |
| 3.12 | **MD** commented that the events in Worcestershire for businesses is saturated, therefore, could the LEP partner with stakeholders and influence their events, e.g. AI could collaborate with Heart of Worcestershire on their Centre of Excellence event. | |
| 3.13 | **CA** commented on the AI topic, that Bosch had a speaker on AI who talked about the basics of adopting and using it within an organisation. This might be a good way to engage and encourage SMEs on this topic. | |
| 3.14 | **JC** suggested that the Innovation Board might be able to give ideas on this area and thanked AP for his hard work with the events. | |
| | **Action**: Reports passed on to the Board. | **AP** |
| **4.** | **<u>BetaDen Update</u>:** | |
| 4.1 | KS presents to the Board.<br><br>The meeting was then opened for questions. | |
| 4.2 | The Board discussed the need for early decisions on the future of UKSPF money, as otherwise in danger of losing good staff and valuable projects. **GA** commented that he would feedback these thoughts to Central Government. | |
| 4.3 | **PW** commented that BetaDen have been forced to find private investment, there is a need for better inward investment, but still needs continued funding and an inward investment plan. | |
| 4.4 | **JC** asked who will take the lead on this.<br>**PW** answered that the WLEP will lead this. | |

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| 4.5 | **NH** commented that having only recently joined the BetaDen Advisory Board that the work taken to further BetaDen and to be nationally recognised as one of the best Tech Accelerators, shouldn't be underestimated.<br>Then thanked **KS** and the team for their hard work.<br><br>**Action** to highlight to local MPs the need to seek urgent clarity on future of UKSPF or alternative funding beyond March 2025. LEP to draft briefing for local MPs. | **GW** |
| | **LEP Delivery Plan 2024-28** | |
| 5.1 | **GW** presents.<br><br>**JG** then presents on the Skills Delivery plan.<br><br>The meeting was opened to comments and questions. | |
| 5.2 | **SG** commented that both the WLEP Growth agenda and the Skills Delivery Plan were well developed but needed further support.<br>Then commented that more finance and resource are needed to do this. | |
| 5.3 | **KM** suggested that JG & KS talk to the Worcestershire Leaders Board, they can then help to get the messages out there. | |
| 5.4 | **SG** then emphasised that sustaining the good things that WLEP do is a priority now.<br><br>**LW** presents on the Innovation Delivery Plan.<br><br>The meeting is opened to questions and comments. | |
| 5.5 | **NH** commented that there needs to be more support for young entrepreneurs. | |
| 5.6 | **MD** added that it is about giving them the confidence to be entrepreneurs, changing their mindsets and that maybe BetaDen could talk to students to inspire them. | |
| 5.7 | **JG** commented that students wanting to do ICT apprenticeships often don't have the right skills from school, due partly to lack of equipment and well-trained tutors.<br>**NH** added that there is a difference between ICT skills and Business owner skills. | |
| 5.8 | **JC** commented that Innovation isn't always just about Tech, sometimes it's innovating an area of your production line or supply chain. | |
| 5.9 | **NH** commented that it isn't always about the enablers, but about the environment that fosters ideas and mindsets and confidence to support good innovation. | |

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| 5.10 | **JC** asked if there was scope to lever to other centres such as: Catapult Centres. | |
| 5.11 | **NH** asked if there was the possibility of Worcestershire having it's own Catapult Centre.<br>**JC** answered that each centre is based around a theme e.g. Sheffield's is based on Forging.<br><br>**LW** presents on Business Environment (WGH)<br><br>The meeting is opened to comments and questions. | |
| 5.12 | **DB** commented on the current approach of free for all, he asked if it could be a paid for service for high growth businesses. | |
| 5.13 | **PW** commented that the funding is output led, but there is a new approach of pro-actively targeting high growth businesses rather than those businesses finding the WGH. **PW** also commented that there often isn't a good perception of anything of value in everything for free, there is a model in France where the service is free and then is charged for. | |
| 5.14 | **JC** commented that while free, the change in mindset that the WGH can give to businesses, isn't easy to measure.<br><br>**LW** clarified the free to all at point of access, is a requirement of existing funding provision from central government.<br><br>**PW asked for agreement from the Board that the Delivery Plan was agreed so WLEP could move forward to carry out the plan.**<br>**The Board agreed**.<br><br>**ACTION**: September meeting agenda item: Decision from the WLEP Board on utilising funding for the next 12 months.<br><br>**ACTION**: Meeting offline to discuss the opportunity of a Catapult Centre.<br><br>**ACTION**: distribute the Delivery Plan | **LW/GW**<br><br>**JC/NH**<br><br>**LW/GW** |
| | **AOB**<br><br>None. | |
| | **Dates of Next meeting**<br>**20 Sept 2024 10:00 – 13:00**<br>**29 Nov 2024 10:00 – 13:00** | |