



Enterprise and
Growth Scrutiny
Committee

30 July 2015

10.00 am

Item

3

Public

**MINUTES OF THE ENTERPRISE AND GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON 2 JULY 2015
10.00 AM - 11.15 AM**

Responsible Officer: Julie Fildes
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Present

Councillor Steve Davenport (Chairman)
Councillors Dean Carroll (Vice Chairman), Andrew Bannerman, Nicholas Bardsley,
Charlotte Barnes, John Hurst-Knight, Jean Jones, William Parr and Peter Cherrington
(Substitute) (substitute for Pauline Dee)

13 Apologies for Absence and Substitutes

Apologies were received from Councillor Pauline Dee.

Councillor Peter Cherrington attended as substitute for Councillor Pauline Dee.

14 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were none disclosed.

15 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 11th June 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

16 Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

17 Member Question Time

There were no questions from Members.

18 Marches Local Enterprise Partnership [LEP] Update

Gill Hamer, Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Director thanked Members for inviting her to talk to them about the work of the LEP. She introduced Graham Wynn, Marches LEP Chairman, and Mandy Thorn, Chair of the Shropshire Business Board, also a Board Member of the Marches LEP. She explained that the Marches LEP had been established in 2011 and was one of 39 across England. Since the previous attendance at Committee by a LEP representative in March 2013, the Marches LEP had progressed to delivery mode.

She referred Members to a tabled LEP Briefing Paper [copy attached to signed minutes]. She explained that the Strategic Economic Plan setting out the LEP's economic growth priorities was a Government requirement and had been in the public domain since April 2014. £75m had been secured under Growth Deal 1 to support economic growth in the Marches area. It was anticipated that the projects funded by this award would be ongoing until 2021 and would achieve a further £20m of funding from the private sector.

Members noted that projects in Shropshire included the Shrewsbury Integrated Transport Package and the Oxon Link Road.

The LEP Director continued that the Marches LEP had also achieved an additional £7.7m of funding through the Growth Deal Extension for broadband infrastructure; £5.02m of which was allocated to Shropshire. The Marches LEP had also secured a special rate Public Works Loan Board loan of £17.3m for the University Centre Shrewsbury.

In response to a Member's query about the future of LEPs, the Director stated that LEP representatives from the Midlands region had been meeting with Government representatives regarding economic growth and how it was to be achieved. LEP representatives had been reassured to hear that LEPs were central to the Government's plans to deliver growth. Members noted that a Government announcement was expected on 8th July 2015 regarding Core Funding.

A Member asked for information on the location of the physical Shropshire Growth Hub planned for Shrewsbury. The Director confirmed that a location had not yet been identified. She continued that there was no core funding available for its establishment and running costs, but the LEP had allocated £15k for each of the three physical Growth Hubs. The other two hubs were to be located in Telford and Hereford. She continued that BIS had awarded £250k for the development and running of the virtual hub which would run alongside the physical hubs. In response to a Member's question about the criteria for success, the Director replied that success criteria would be identified and applied by the Board.

In response to concerns expressed by Members about the move towards regionalisation, the Director explained that representatives from the Marches LEP met bi-monthly in Birmingham with representatives from the five other LEPs in the West Midlands area. They were working to ensure that the Marches area was not disenfranchised from city deals and were making the case to ensure Government recognition of the region and its potential to develop. There were also meetings with LEP representatives from the wider Midlands area, with work being undertaken on the strategic connectivity of the area between the Northern Powerhouse area and London. She continued that unlike the North, the Midlands was not being led by public sector funding but by the business community through the LEPs.

Members asked about the interaction between the Marches LEP's and other organisations. The Director confirmed that it was in regular contact with UKTI, Shrewsbury BID and the Chamber of Commerce. It was noted that the Chamber of Commerce was being invited to nominate a representative to join the Growth Hub Steering Group.

A Member asked the Director to provide further information on The Marches Skills Capital Programme. The Director explained that the Marches LEP had secured £3.3m for 2016/17 which could be used by colleges of further education and private training providers, provided they could match fund the award they received. Eight expressions of interest had been received but this had diminished to four, as many colleges/training providers were experiencing reductions in funding and were unable to provide the required match funding. She continued that the Marches LEP was holding discussions with partners/stake holders to decide on the allocation of the funding for strategic projects in both the north and south of the LEP area. She added that manufacturing companies had identified issues with an ageing workforce and a lack of skilled workers to replace the existing employees as they reach retirement age. A mapping exercise was to be undertaken with large and small manufacturers to identify the mismatch in the skills provision. She offered to provide Members with information on the new Hotel and Catering College which had recently opened in Telford.

In response to a Member's question, the Director agreed that additional funding was expected for apprenticeships and employer engagement in the process.

The Director suggested that Members may wish to receive the Marches LEP Newsletter. She continued that she wished to express her appreciation to the Council for all the support the Marches LEP team had received, both in housing the organisation and providing Officer support to enable it to operate.

19 Empty Homes Strategy Task and Finish Group Report

The Empty Homes Officer introduced the Empty Homes Strategy Task and Finish Group Report and outlined its findings and recommendations. Members noted and endorsed the importance of Officers in different parts of the Council working together and moving away from the silo style of working.

In response to a Member's query, the Empty Homes Officer explained it was possible to accurately estimate the greater level of income that would be generated through

the Empty Homes Bonus from an increase in staff resources. She added that returning empty properties to use also had wider social benefit as well as the direct economic benefit to the Council.

Members noted the excellent performance of the Empty Homes Section in comparison to other local authorities. The Chairman of the Empty Homes Strategy Task and Finish Group added that the Group had observed that the Empty Homes Officers had a good operating model from which to expand.

RESOLVED:

That the Empty Homes Strategy Task and Finish Group Report be accepted and formally presented to the Portfolio Holder for consideration.

20 Future Work Programme for the Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny Committee

RESOLVED:

- i. that the next meeting of the Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny Committee receive an update on Tourism in the County and Tourism Officers be invited to attend and answer Members' questions; and
- ii. that the topic of apprenticeships be considered at a future meeting of the Committee.

21 Dates for Future Meetings

RESOLVED:

That the Committee next meets at 10am on Thursday 30th July 2015.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: