

**MINUTES OF THE SHROPSHIRE BUSINESS BOARD MEETING HELD ON
MONDAY 2 DECEMBER 2013 4.30 PM - 6.40 PM
AT SHIREHALL, SHREWSBURY**

Present:

Businesses

Arthur Hill (Vice Chair)	CH Hill & Sons, Much Wenlock
Nick Chavasse MBE	NRG Direct Mail Ltd
Karen Davis MBE	Heart of England Fine Foods
Mandy Stoker	Chair of METNET, E4 Environment
Mandy Thorn (Chair)	Marches Care Ltd

Representatives

Cllr Steve Charmley	Portfolio Holder Business Growth
Kairen Francis	Jobcentre Plus
Rob Hudson	Handlesbanken – Bank Representative
Ann Johnson	Federation of Small Business
Will Morris	Utilities Representative
Richard Sheehan	Shropshire Chamber of Commerce & Enterprise Ltd

Officers

Jacqui Casey	Marches LEP
Andy Evans	Group Manager, Business Growth and Prosperity
Mark Pembleton	Service Manager for Business and Enterprise
Julie Macrae	Business Engagement Officer
Lorna Perry	Digital Services Development Manager

In Attendance

Steve Davenport	Chair Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Mike Owen	Portfolio Holder, Resources, Finance and Support
Amanda Holyoak	Committee Officer

1. Welcome, Apologies and Introductions

Apologies were received from Tony Bywater, Shaun Carvill, Fay Easton, Katie Foster, Duncan Gray, Tudor Griffiths, Simon MacVicker, Nick Scott, James Thompson and Steve Wain

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

The Chair asked Members with outstanding interest forms to forward them to Julie Macrae as soon as possible.

3. Minutes

3.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2013 were confirmed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

Proposals for Creative Sector Conference

Mark Pembleton reported that Shaun Carvill was planning an event for Easter 2014.

Environmental Health Scoring of Food Premises

Members had wondered if it was possible to create an income stream for the Council by providing updated assessments to businesses who requested them. Mark Pembleton reported that Environmental Health was governed by legislation and it was not possible to offer beyond what was nationally prescribed. Ann Johnson invited the Portfolio Holder for Business Growth to a meeting in January to discuss the situation and said the FSB would take the issue up nationally if necessary.

Higher Education Update

Andy Evans reported that Michael Hyatt, Shropshire Council's Corporate Head of Strategic Planning, was leading on this. A meeting with Harper Adams University was scheduled for the following day.

Business Hub

Some Board Members had recently visited the Innovation Centre at Chester. Concern was expressed that progress with the Shropshire Business Hub was slow as it was tied into the University in Shropshire developments and the Innovation Centre proposals.

William Morris emphasised that the hub needed to happen within the next six months, and if this was not going to be possible, the whole concept would need to be revisited. If co-location with a University within an Innovation Centre was not going to be delivered quickly, then an alternative was needed. It should not be difficult to set up a Hub in an accessible place and then relocate it later. Seed money should be identified as soon as possible so that progress could be made at the first opportunity.

Andy Evans explained that the study completed by the University of Chester had identified an opportunity in Shropshire and it was likely that the model suggested would grow incrementally. Development of a higher education offer in Shropshire had been identified in the LEP's Strategic Economic Plan and Harper Adams University and all HE and FE providers in Shropshire had agreed to collaborate with the University of Chester.

Karen Davies referred to the new Enterprise facility set up by SCAT in Shrewsbury. William Morris confirmed that he would be talking to Steve Wain. The Hub would not be duplicating services and would have a signposting and brokerage role.

The need to hear of developments first hand, rather than through the media was emphasised and the Board asked for an update on both Business Hub and HE developments at its 20 January 2014 meeting.

The Chair commented that the Hub needed to be driven by the private sector and that she would be e-mailing those with an interest in its development.

Mandy Thorn

Composition of Board

The Chair reported that she was considering the composition of the Board and the need to broaden diversity of membership, for example, through recruiting younger members. Representation from business areas not currently covered was also under consideration.

4. Advertising on Shropshire Council Website

Lorna Perry, Digital Manager, Shropshire Council, asked Business Board members for their thoughts on the potential for advertising on the Council's Internet site and staff intranet site. Other Councils raised revenue in this way and she had been exploring the possibilities for Shropshire. Her initial feeling was that offering advertising to local businesses would be more desirable than offering space to national firms like Tesco etc. In the first instance she saw this being managed and maintained by the authority.

Board members agreed that advertising could potentially create revenue for the Council but advised that detailed analysis would be needed. Member also warned of ethical and reputational risks and advised that care would be needed over who sold the advertising space and how. They warned that costs might even outstrip revenue if managed in house.

Members were invited to contact Lorna with any advice and Richard Sheehan offered to share his experience in this area.

Richard Sheehan

The Chair asked Lorna to keep the Board in touch with any developments.

Lorna Perry

5. Marches LEP Strategic Economic Plan (SEP)

Mark Pembleton summarised the background and purpose of the LEP's Strategic Economic Plan which would be used to determine the amount of funding to be made available from the Government's Local Growth Fund. The Plan had been informed by the Economic Growth Strategies of the constituent local authorities and needed to cover the LEP's whole strategy for growth for the next five years. The first draft needed to be submitted before Christmas with the final version due to be submitted to Government by the end of March 2014.

The Chair reported her disappointment with the initial draft which she felt had a public sector feel which needed to be addressed urgently. The document was very dry, contained errors, and simply did not sell the benefits of working and living in the Marches LEP area. It was important that historic, current, and potential private sector opportunities should be included.

Ann Johnson reported that the Chair of the LEP had asked her and Richard Sheehan to take a lead in representing the small business voice. One of the reasons that business input had been limited was the scheduling of day

time meetings which business people were not able to attend.

The Chair asked for help in shaping the document so that it reflected what the business community wanted and included knowledge and excitement about the area. It needed to outline how to play to strengths and continue to grow, intentions for infrastructure investment and how a predominantly rural LEP could still expedite growth but not at the expense of the quality of life and local environment.

Whilst answering questions, Jacqui Casey, LEP Executive Co-ordinating Officer, said there had not been any pointers, strategic overview or indication of whether large or small projects would be favourable. Full project details were not needed yet but would be needed soon. All agreed that it was important to punch above the LEP's weight due to the nature of the competition.

It was confirmed that the SEP should interact with the EU Investment Strategy but this was not straight forward due to differing submission timescales.

The Board sought reassurance of the commitment of political representatives on the LEP, particularly as there had been some meetings where there had been no political representative from Shropshire Council.

Councillor Mike Owen, Portfolio Holder Resources, Finance and Support, went on to report on meetings held by Portfolio Holders with Ministers in London and the Chair encouraged the sharing of feedback or information gained.

All Board Members were asked to:

- Read through the draft document
- Identify opportunities to add the Board's aspirations and tie in the work of business champions
- Identify logic chains to create jobs and growth
- Identify where simple barriers may be preventing development

All
Members

Comments to be sent to Mark Pembleton by end of 9/12/14.

Julie Macrae was asked to re-circulate the Project Long List to all Members of the Board to help stimulate further debate.

Julie
Macrae

6. Marches Investment Strategy Update

Mark Pembleton reported that the EU Investment Strategy was due for submission on 31 January 2014. The Marches had notionally been allocated £94.9m split pro rata between the three local authorities. The following priorities had been identified:

- Employment and Skills
- Low Carbon Economy
- Business Support
- ICT and Broadband

- Environment and Land Based Economy
- Research and Innovation

The next steps would involve identification of sources of match funding. The Chair felt that most of the thematic priorities could be delivered by the private sector as well as the public sector. Small amounts of seed funding in the right place could lever in significant funding.

In response to questions about state aid, Jacqui Casey referred to extensive experience available to assist private bodies delivering for the public sector.

It was agreed that the presentation slides be circulated to all members.

Ann Johnson referred to the split in ERDF Budget and ESF Budget and the importance of avoiding looking at these in silos. Mark Pembleton confirmed that all these funds should be seen as a whole and any project could potentially use an allocation from different EU funds.

The Chair referred to expertise within Shropshire Council for developing projects and EU funding and the need for the private sector and social enterprise to buy in to this. Karen Davies commended the support offered by the funding team at Shropshire Council.

Next steps included identification of match funding, LEP Board endorsement on 27 January 2014 and final submission end of January. Suggestions for providing opportunities for engagement were discussed. It was agreed that as far as possible as many business networks should be involved in future consultation alongside the next Business Board meeting.

Richard Sheehan reported that the 12 affiliated Chambers in Shropshire had received the draft strategy.

It was agreed that the LEP's SEP and EU Investment Strategy needed to interact with and complement each other as far as possible.

7. Inward Investment Work – update from Steve Charmley

The Portfolio Holder for Business Growth reported on recent work of the Council with the MP for Shrewsbury and Atcham and UKTI in ensuring Shropshire's top investment opportunities were being promoted globally. He circulated a pack to members which had been created to promote investment opportunities around the world, and highlighted the sectors Shropshire was focusing on.

A key visit by the UKTI Chief Executive, Nick Baird, to Shropshire had been organised and hosted by Shropshire Council and the Local MP and had been very successful. Secondly there had been a Marches LEP wide Food and Drink UKTI tour too.

Andy Evans had recently been on an EU funded trip to China to develop links and explore opportunities, particularly in relation to environmental technology, creative and digital industries and tourism. Andy agreed to

**Julie
Macrae**

**Mark
Pembleton
to discuss
with Chair**

**Andy
Evans**

report back on the opportunities established at the Board's next meeting.

Richard Sheehan reported on a recent exporting event designed to help bring businesses into the exporting environment. The Chairman commented on the excellent quality of these events and encouraged all to attend one.

The Portfolio Holder was asked to ensure that positive information was promoted and circulated

Steve
Charmley

8. Performance Report – Shropshire Economic Growth Strategy

The Chair referred to the good news stories in the report, including the delivery of growth and decline in youth unemployment.

She asked that a press release be arranged to promote the good news.

Mark
Pembleton

9. State of the Economy Update

The Chair referred to the report circulated and explained that in future the Bank of England representative, Glynn Jones, would attend meetings twice yearly.

10. Future Agenda Items

The following agenda items were requested for the next meeting:

- Consultation on the EU Investment Strategy before 31/1/14 submission
- Broadband and Mobile connectivity
- Update on Business Hub
- Update on HE Developments from Chester University
- Andy Evans - opportunities identified in China

11. Any Other Business

The following was circulated:

A briefing on 'Small Business Saturday' scheduled for 7/12/14

NFU briefing

Chamber of Commerce/UKTI Trade Training course info

Update on successes in Shropshire from various grant schemes

12. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 20 January 2013 at 4.30 pm at Shirehall.

Requests had been received to hold meetings on alternative days or times. Mark Pembleton agreed to consult the Board on options.

Mark
Pembleton