

Sonia Roberts MBE, Chair Marches LEP
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Shropshire Council
Shirehall
Abbey Foregate
Shrewsbury
Shropshire SY2 6ND

1 September 2023

Dear Sonia,

TRANSFER OF MARCHES LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP CORE FUNCTIONS

Following Government's announcement of the 4th August we are writing to confirm the position of the local authority members to the Marches LEP. Collectively we support the Government's policy approach of empowering local leaders and the drive towards devolution to local authorities. We are keen to work with you, fellow board members and LEP staff to establish an orderly and structured transition towards transferring LEP assets, functions and responsibilities before the 31st March 2024.

While Government have confirmed the cessation of sponsorship and funding to LEPs and are supporting local authorities to take on the functions currently delivered by LEPs we recognise the huge contribution that the LEP has made to the economic wellbeing of our area over many years and the legacy that it leaves. In making this transition we are committed to ensuring this work and legacy is celebrated alongside establishing appropriate new arrangements that maintain the collaboration between partners and across geographies that remains critical to support our shared ambitions.

To help ensure a smooth transition and meet government's governance expectations, we will be seeking authority from our respective councils to establish a formal 'Joint Committee' of the three councils, comprising of the three council leaders (or nominated representatives). We aim to establish the Joint Committee early this autumn so that it can work with the LEP on agreeing and putting in place transitional arrangements and the transfer of functions in a well-managed, structured and collaborative way.

We recognise that the management of a number of funding programmes, contingent assets and liabilities will take many years to work through the system, so we envisage that the work of the Joint Committee will take as long as is required to manage these responsibilities effectively.

In moving to these new arrangements, we also recognise the vital role that businesses play in developing strong local economic partnerships and we are committed to ensuring a strong business voice and representation within future arrangements. In this sense we hope that businesses can see that we are ambitious for greater levels of investment, growth and development.

To assist in assessing these needs, drawing a programme together and managing the transfer process, we are establishing a senior officer group in support of Leaders and the Joint Committee. As the Accountable Body for the Marches LEP, Shropshire Council will work in partnership with Herefordshire and Telford and Wrekin Council colleagues. As set out in Government guidance we are keen to complete the transfer process by end of March 2024.

We propose that a meeting be organised in September to confirm the above and begin the process of dialogue and planning towards these new arrangements. We welcome working with you on these arrangements and we propose developing a joint public statement with you to help keep business and other local stakeholders informed of these arrangements.

It is appropriate that we formally recognise and thank everyone involved with Marches LEP over the past 12 years for their dedication and hard work. We particularly recognise the work of the existing Team who have had to deal with significant uncertainty over many months showing immense professionalism and maintaining delivery.

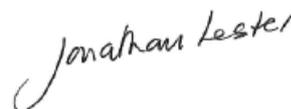
Yours sincerely



Cllr Lezley Picton
Leader - Shropshire Council



Cllr Shaun Davies
Leader – Telford & Wrekin Council



Cllr Jonathan Lester
Leader – Herefordshire Council