

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
SHROPSHIRE BUSINESS BOARD**

**HELD ON
MONDAY 13th MARCH 2017
4.30 pm – 6.30 pm**

Present:

Mandy Thorn MBE (Chair)	Marches Care Ltd, Shrewsbury
Lindsay Barton	Golden Kite Solutions Ltd
Catherine Baxter	Harper Adams University (Agri-technology sector rep)
William Morris	Utilities Representative – Managing Director of SSE Retail
John Pitchford	Barclays Bank
Arthur Hill	CH Hill & Sons, Much Wenlock
Gill Hamer	Director Marches LEP
Paul Kirkbright	University Centre Shrewsbury
Matthew Snelson	Grainger & Worrall Ltd
Matt Bulley	Caterpillar Shrewsbury
Mandy Stoker	E4 Environment
Catherine Armstrong	Representing Shrewsbury Colleges Group
Richard Lumby	Carillion PLC
Simon MacVickar	Shropshire Chamber/Bridgnorth Aluminium
Cllr Nic Laurens	Deputy Portfolio Holder, Shropshire Council
Cllr Steve Davenport	Chair of Shropshire Councils Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny committee

Shropshire Council Officers

George Candler	Director of Place and Enterprise (present for part of meeting)
Gemma Davies	Head of Economic Growth
Lisa Ashby	Economic Growth Coordinator
Phil Weir	Revenues and Benefits Service Manager (present for part of meeting)

10 Welcome, Apologies and Introductions

- 10.1 The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and introduced Phil Weir, Revenues and Benefits Service Manager, Shropshire Council who would be presenting to the Board the changes to Business Rates.
- 10.2 Apologies for absence were received from, Chris Woolley [Department for Work and Pensions], Tony Bywater [Salop Leisure], Richard

Sheehan [Shropshire Chamber of Commerce], Paul Bennett (Vice Chair) [Shropshire Business Partnership] and Tudor Griffiths [Tudor Griffiths Ltd], Cllr Steve Charmley [Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Business and Economy, Shropshire Council]

11 Declarations of Interest

11.1 No declarations of Interest recorded.

12 Minutes and Matters Arising

12.1 The minutes of the meeting on the 21st January 2017 were checked for accuracy. No matters arising were recorded and the minutes of the meeting were confirmed as a correct record and that actions had been followed up.

12.2 Arthur Hill expressed his disappointment that Cllr Charmley, as the Portfolio for Business and Economy had not attended any recent Board meetings. The Chair echoed this disappointment.

12.3 Gill Hamer, Director of the Marches LEP gave a brief update to the Board on Growth Deal 3 and the announcement that £21.9m has been secured for the Marches region which will support five projects, one of which is a Shropshire Project, the Flaxmill Maltings which has secured funding of 1.9m with an extra £20m of funding from HLF. Gill also outlined the other Marches projects which include a university in Hereford and a new enterprise and science park in Newport.

12.4 Gill also alluded to the possibility of securing another 3 million, and acknowledged that whilst it wasn't the 67.9m originally bid for, the Marches had done very well in comparison with other Local Enterprise Partnerships.

12.5 The Chair congratulated both Gill and Graham Wynn for working hard on securing the funding and confirmed it was good news about the Flaxmill but disappointing it couldn't be more.

13 Business Rate Changes

13.1 Phil Weir gave an informative high level presentation on the changes to Business Rates, highlighting that the responsibility of the Valuation Office who set the rateable values and implement the changes. Shropshire Council bill and collect the rates based on the value set by the Valuation Office.

13.2 Phil gave an overview of what the revaluation is and explained that the 2017 revaluation is part of a five yearly revaluation cycle postponed from 2015 and that revaluations do not raise extra money but instead redistribute the rate burden, with 7 out of 10 businesses nationally seeing a reduction. Phil also spoke about the transitional arrangements put in place and small business rate relief which comprised of an

increase to the thresholds so a small business may now be able to get rate relief, having not been previously eligible.

13.3 There was discussion around the table, with Phil clarifying the changes will not increase the overall size of the pot but redistribute the rate burden nationally.

13.4 The Chair thanked Phil for his presentation and confirmed that an invitation had been extended to the Valuation Office to attend the Board meeting in May.

14 Building Our Industrial Strategy: Green Paper Consultation

14.1 Gemma Davies gave a presentation to the Board on the UK Modern Industrial Strategy and included key messages and initial reflections for Shropshire. Gemma confirmed that she had also presented the same slides to cabinet members at the beginning of January.

14.2 Gemma gave a summary of the key messages and highlighted that the new government's strategy was very much about inclusive growth and highlighted the importance of place helping to drive the agenda forward. This strategy consultation is a good opportunity to collectively feed thoughts back for Shropshire. Gemma noted that there was real opportunity within the industrial strategy to look at things differently, including new clusters and sectors.

14.3 Gemma outlined the 10 pillars and the opportunity to consider what this would mean for Shropshire. The consultation is open until the 17th April and confirmed it would also be part of the LEP Board Away Day agenda. Gemma stressed the importance and value of putting a response together from the Board.

14.4 There was some discussion over the length of the document and the number of questions but Gill Hamer clarified that there were more focused key questions from BIES. These would be circulated to the Board after the meeting.

14.5 Simon Macvickar highlighted the opportunity for industries to do deals which would allow for industries to become more competitive and registered his disappointment with the city deals.

14.6 A discussion was had on the specific opportunities for the Marches and its key sectors. Gill Hamer identified lots of collaborative working with various LEPs on sector research. Opportunities were discussed around energy supply, digital connectivity, agri tech, environmental technologies, auto supply chains, cyber security and defence, with Paul Kirkbright confirming that recent discussions had taken place on a health cluster.

14.7 The chair encouraged feedback on the strategy and Lisa Ashby confirmed that she would collate responses.

GH/GD/LA

LA

- 14.8 It was suggested as it was a short window that a smaller focus group should meet to start to prepare a proposal and response to the strategy. It was agreed this should be around advanced manufacturing skills.
- 14.9 The chair queried how the FSB were responding. Lyndsay Barton confirmed there would be a national response from the FSB but Lyndsay keen to contribute into the Board response.
- 14.10 The Chair noted significant opportunity around digital and identified the potential to work closely with the Chamber, specifically in relation to the micro businesses. The Chair also noted the significant number of small creative businesses in the county and looking at how we can try to bring them together.
- 14.11 There was discussion around the format of the response, with board members suggesting it should be set against the pillars already set out.
- 14.12 There was also discussion on the perception of Shropshire and encouraging investors. This was in relation to appearance and general first impressions and the example of the public realm in parts of Shrewsbury was raised as an example. Cllr Laurens highlighted that there were future plans for Shrewsbury which would include improvements to the town, for example updating Pride Hill. The principle of appearance and impressions of a place is really important.
- 14.13 In response to a question raised about Telford and Wrekin's response, the Chair confirmed she would speak to Paul Hinkins. Cllr Laurens confirmed that the Malcom Pate, Leader of Shropshire Council is committed to working relationship with T&W and the LEP.

MT

15 Shropshire's Draft Economic Growth Strategy 2017-21

- 15.1 Gemma Davies presented the draft Economic Growth Strategy to the Board and confirmed that the consultation was now open until the 28th April. Gemma outlined that the development of the strategy is very much focused on developing the Shropshire vision and setting a strategy which will evolve the direction of the Shropshire economy. Gemma welcomed the Board feeding into the consultation and noted that collaboration with the Board would be key.
- 15.2 Gemma confirmed that the IPPR North workshops were one of a number of different research and engagement exercises which fed into the development of the draft, which also included our own socio economic data.
- 15.3 This is very much a document for Shropshire and the strategy is very much focused on how to make a step change to Shropshire's economy.
- 15.4 A robust discussion took place around the table. It was agreed that more emphasis was needed for the FE sector within the strategy. The impact of the strategy would also need close monitoring in terms of

targets, for example job creation, GVA etc. Quality of place and utilising assets were also discussed as an important aspect of the vision. First impressions and reputation were agreed as key and the language used to encourage investment important. There was agreement of the need to get the product right in a competitive market.

15.5 The priority actions were discussed and how they could be divided into the immediate (6 months), short to medium (up to 5 years) and longer term (5 years plus).

15.6 The role of the Economic Growth Team was discussed with the Business Development Manager roles being key to building relationships and having contact with the key companies. It was agreed that communication had to be proactive with good dialogue.

15.7 It was identified that the Growth Investment Strategy and project pipeline would be key as we need to be project led and more strategic going forward. The Board were in agreement that it was very positive to hear phrases such as project pipeline and enabling growth being discussed.

15.8 Cllr Laurens highlighted his involvement with income generation citing that there was a new ethos within the Council to invest in its own assets. Nic also thanked Gemma and the team for all of the work on producing the draft strategy, this was echoed by the Board.

15.9 There was a robust discussion on the feedback to the strategy and also the economic vision for Shropshire, with the Chair noting how positive it was to hear the Council are investing in their own estate. The Board also discussed their role in enabling growth and investment and how to move 'Shropshire PLC' on with a focus on Shropshire USP's. Potential pipeline projects and pilots were discussed with the emphasis on being ambitious with the vision for Shropshire. George also emphasised the opportunity for the private sector to drive forward the agenda, with businesses talking directly to government.

15.10 The discussion was concluded with agreement that this was a good opportunity for the Board to input and help shape the Economic Growth Strategy for Shropshire by working together to enable more investment in 'our' place. Smaller sub working groups were suggested to work closely with Gemma, George and Gill. Simon McVickar, William Morris, Matthew Snelson, Matt Bulley and Richard Lumby agreed to be part of the smaller working consultation group who would meet over the next two to three weeks.

GD/GC/GH
SM/WM/
MS/RL/MB

15.11 Gill Hamer notified the Board of an invitation to meet with Jesse Norman, MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State on the 23rd March during his visit to the Marches. This would be a good opportunity for the Board to meet with Jesse to talk about the role of the Business Board and also response to the Industrial Strategy Green Paper. Gill apologised for the short notice but hoped the Board would be able to join them for a 45 minute lunch meeting at University Centre Shrewsbury. Lisa Ashby to email invitation and coordinate responses.

LA

16 Round Table Update from Business Board Members

- 16.1 The Chair highlighted that due to extended discussion on the two consultations the update from members would need to be brief.
- 16.2 Richard Lumby –Defence and Construction - Carillion PLC
Richard gave a good overview of facilities, estates and construction, highlighting that construction was now very expensive. Richard also pointed to high maintenance costs and that having an asset management plan in place was essential.
- 16.3 John Pitchford – Barclays Bank
John reported that despite Brexit concerns lending requests were up.
- 16.4 Simon MacVickar – Shropshire Chamber/Bridgnorth Aluminium
Reported that despite some uncertainty the order book was buoyant with Q1 looking better. The exchange rate has helped.
- 16.5 William Morris –Utilities Representative Managing Director of SSE Retail
Will highlighted that in the previous meeting he had urged businesses to check their energy deals. Prices had now gone up. Will also reported that the roll out of Smart meters was now taking place and as previously highlighted there is an opportunity around skills training. The chair suggested a separate discussion outside of the meeting with Gemma on this.
- 16.6 Mandy Stoker – E4environment Ltd
Mandy reported that business was busy. Lots of big projects with job creation but alluded to a cautious approach at the moment.
- 16.7 Matt Bulley - Caterpillar Shrewsbury
Matt reported that they had secured a 5 year contract with the potential for 30 to 40 jobs being created in Shrewsbury.
- 16.8 Matthew Snelson - Grainger and Worrall Ltd
Reported that trade figures for G&W were strong and they are now starting to look at disruptive technologies. The Marches Centre of Manufacturing and Technology should also be up and running for September although they were still looking to find the additional funding.
- 16.9 The Chair apologised to the Higher Education members that they had been unable to give an update but they were invited to send one for inclusion and circulation.

17 AOB

- 17.1 The Chair reported that two new Board members had been recruited and would be attending the meeting on the 22nd May. They would be representing the retail sector and Business Development/cyber security.

The chair highlighted that they were still looking to recruit representatives from marketing and development/construction.

18 Next Meeting Dates 2017

Monday 22 nd May 2017	Shirehall, Shrewsbury
Monday 10 th July 2017	Harper Adams
Monday 18 th September 2017	Shirehall, Shrewsbury
Monday 27 th November 2017	Shirehall, Shrewsbury