

Herefordshire Business Board
Business Planning Workshop

Tuesday 12th June 2012

Present:

Chair: Neil Kerr (NK), Mike Ashton (MA), Phil Collins (PC), Joseph Connor (JS), Andy Edwards (AE), Richard Garnett (RG), Angela Fitch (AF), Jonathan Hines (JH), John Jones (JJ), Cathy Meredith (CM), Cllr Roger Phillips (RP), Helen Thomas (HT), Rachel Jones (RJ)

In Attendance:

Clem Attwood (CA), Tim Kidson (TK), Mandy Thorn (MT), Dorothy Coleman (DC)

Apologies:

Peter Brown (PB), Stephen Eckley (SE), Ian Hilditch (IH), Andrew Sanders (AS), Paul Sinclair (PS), Ray Stone (RS).

1. Apologies

Apologies noted.

2. Introduction

NK stressed importance of identifying key initiatives to be taken forward by HBB (with identified leads), which will complement Herefordshire Council priorities and feed into Marches LEP Business Plan.

Action: RJ to provide bullet pointed summary of HBB's achievements over the last 12 months.

3. Herefordshire Economic Priorities

RJ gave a presentation highlighting the Council's economic priorities and support that could be provided to HBB. HBB's plan could either enhance or complement Council priorities or could be completely independent.

Referring to the Construction Skills Academy and Apprenticeship initiatives, PC stressed the need for more people with the right skills, and also the need to be joined up with existing training at HCT.

4. Herefordshire Research

CA gave a presentation which provided an economic overview of Herefordshire summarising working age population, number and nature of businesses, average earnings, unemployment, educational attainment, national and regional comparisons, and future potential.

Agreed that links should be made into local schools, and that BB members should offer to assist where possible including serving as school governors.

JC requested that HC looks into purchasing 2 databases which Shropshire Council uses at £12k each (MINT & FAME) which include complete lists of all businesses and directors; BB would need to be clear how they could use the databases.

Action: MT to speak to Andy Evans re MINT & FAME and pass info to RJ/NW

Action: Alexia Heath (Senior Advisor Post 16 Education and Training) to attend a future meeting

5. Key Issues Restricting Business Growth

MA presented 10 issues restricting business growth. Need to map business support offers, and ensure that there is no duplication of effort (ref to 3 ED depts.) Comment that info on HC website not up to date – RJ to check

AF presented and circulated further key factors preventing business growth.

6. Key Project Areas

Several High Growth Company coaching options were presented to the Board.

a) **BIS Growth Accelerator**

National contract delivered by a Regional partner PERA. Aimed at a target group of 20 companies. Up front cost of between £600 and £3,000. Only accept direct referrals and companies have to use recommended coaches and there is no measurement of quality/success/failure.

b) **The Goldman Sacks/Aston University scheme**

Involves an application form followed by diagnostic/screening process and interview with approx 30% of applicants taken on. No charge. Requires attendance at programme of seminars in groups of 6, with the aim of producing a Growth Plan, and is followed by quarterly meetings with peers to monitor plans. The programme is keen to recruit through the LEPs – could take 10 businesses from each LA area and could be delivered locally.

c) **Growth Hub Scheme**

HBB led web resource which would promote growth via case studies viewed on line via a series of webinars, which would help SMEs to understand growth issues. Resource would be open to all SMEs including self employed. Could put 100 businesses through the process in 1 year.

Agreed that b) and c) were of particular interest and should be pursued, and possibility of ERDF funding a voucher scheme considered.

Action: JC to speak to RJ about taking forward

d) **Rural Business Support**

Pilot proposal - 4 pilot business sites have been selected for initial work to identify business needs and signposting requirements. It is proposed to develop a tool and process to roll out across the county and potentially the LEP.

Outreach Service – (potential project in early stages of development, in readiness for “call for bids” - A monthly rural drop in service to deal with full range of business issues.

e) **T K & Associates** (In attendance – Tim Kidson)

Specialise in helping boards of directors and senior managers to clarify direction and focus. This is a low cost option open to any business and is tailored to individual business needs. It uses quarterly Directors’ Hubs to improve networking. A couple of HBB members are already involved.

f) **Business Improvement Districts**

Following failed Portas bid, JC had been looking into BIDs. He explained background to BIDs, and that £500k would be available for administration, but would need to be matched by a marginal increase of business rates.

Agreed to support this idea and that JC should visit the Worcester BID for information on their experience of setting up a BID.

Action: JC to visit Worcester BID

g) Development Land / Planning Restrictions

RS presented information about business parks across the county.

7. Any Other Projects

a) Work Experience

Amey have prototypes for 6-month work experience placements.

Action: Invite Amey to future meeting to explain their Work Experience

b) Schools/Business liaison

MT suggested that the LEP could be proactive in bringing Head Teachers and Governors together to consider how best to enable pupils to engage with businesses to get them work ready.

c) Apprentice

AF suggested that the LEP/Business Board could take on an apprentice. Work could include maintenance of the website and general support to the Board.

8. Review and Round Up

Questions were asked about recent EZ appointments (Inward Investment consultants, Masterplanners and Managing Director) which RP responded to.

9. Date of next meeting: 3.00pm on Tuesday 7 August, location tbc