

Herefordshire Business Board

Notes / Actions from the Meeting – Monday 3rd June 2013

Present: Chair: Neil Kerr (NK), **Vice Chair:** Ray Stone (RS), Andy Edwards (AE), Angela Fitch (AF), Cathy Meredith (CM), Heidi Chamberlain-Jones (HC), Helen Thomas (HT), Jane Preston (JP), Jon Turner (JT), Joseph Connor (JC), Nick Read (NR), Peter Brown (PB), Phil Collins (PC), Richard Garnett (RG), Cllr Roger Phillips (RP), Stephen Eckley (SE), Rachel Jones (RJ).

Apologies: Jonathan Hines (JH), Nick Webster (NW), Mike Ashton (MA)

1. Apologies

Apologies noted.

2. Welcome and Introductions to New Members

NK welcomed the new members; Heidi Chamberlain-Jones, Jane Preston, Jon Turner and Nick Read to the board.

3. Membership Process

JJ outlined the process used for membership recruitment which included scoring all the candidates (including current HBB members who had reapplied) on their sector coverage, the skills and networks they would bring to the board as well as consideration of business size and location in the County. A lot of applications were from small businesses or “one man bands” rather than the larger businesses in the County, this reflects the composition of business sizes in Herefordshire and the support team are confident that the board has comprehensive representation.

There is still one place open on the board which will be filled at an appropriate time and there is likely to be another round within the next 12 months. The process was good, clear and transparent. The board has a role to support membership recruitment by helping identify potential members.

New members welcomed, and two previous members (Ian Hilditch and Andrew Sanders) did not reapply, the support team has written to them to thank them for the time and support they have given to the board. All the HBB members introduced themselves and gave a quick overview.

4. Update from the Marches LEP and Herefordshire Council

Cllr Phillips presented an overview of the current position of the Marches LEP. They have an interim Chair, Graham Wynn currently Chair of the Telford & Wrekin Business Board. He is supported by Marches LEP Board which consists of the three Business Board Chairs, the three local authority leaders and has specialist representatives from tourism and skills.

Herefordshire Council also has new representation on the Marches LEP, Tony Johnson, Leader of the Council. The new Chair of the HBB will also take a place on the board.

Cllr Phillips Chairs the Funding Forum which reports in to the Marches LEP and ensures that the processes are in place for funding and is another link between the Marches LEP and HBB. The Marches LEP also has the Hereford Enterprise Zone, which is chaired by Bill Jackson and is accountable to the Marches LEP.

HBB has a role in monitoring Marches LEP projects and should have an overview of the LEP EU Investment Strategy which is the LEP strategy for bringing down the next round of EU funding (2014 to 2020) to the Marches LEP area. This will link in with the Marches LEP Growth Plan and the Herefordshire Growth Plan, Core and Local Plans. The investment strategy is the route to bring EU funding to the Marches LEP, and the government will also be allocating some Single Pot funds which could be used to align with the EU funds. Work on this is happening across the Marches and HBB will be invited to comment and take part where applicable. HBB has a role with business expertise and as ambassadors for Herefordshire businesses.

There are opportunities for “shovel ready” projects, business support, and access to finance etc. All the LEPs in the UK will be undertaking the same work so there may be opportunities to link with other LEPs such as Worcestershire or Staffordshire on projects.

5. Nominations for New Chair and Vice-Chair

JJ presented the process for new Chair and Vice-Chairs and circulated a copy of the board membership details, timetable and the nomination process information. There will be two Vice-Chairs to support the new Chair.

It was agreed that the timetable was too long, so new dates were agreed (and have since been circulated to the HBB). Nominations and supporting statements from nominees must be sent to RJ by 14th June to be collated and circulated to the board for their votes. Votes to be returned by 23rd June. The support team will count and verify the votes, then inform the ‘Selection Team’ of the outcome. It may be that a second ballot will be required and JJ will initiate this if necessary. Once finalised JJ will sanction RJ to then inform the wider Board of the results. The new Chair and Vice-Chairs will hopefully be in place from 1st July and Chair the HBB meeting of 23rd July.

Action: All

6. HBB Project Round Up:

Business Improvement District

JJ gave an overview of the work to date on the Business Improvement District for Hereford. The project started after the Portas Pilot work 12 months ago, and is likely to take about 18 months to be in place with a core group working on the project. Local groups and partners have been identified and will be contacted at the appropriate time. They have had discussion with more than 80 local businesses and are thinking of the type of support the BID may give which includes; making over empty shops, support for start-up businesses, signage and even outsourcing for the local authority.

EnterpriseHere and Growth Vouchers

JC gave an overview of EnterpriseHere www.enterprisehere.co.uk and its provision on webinars from business experts and Government bodies. There are 26 webinars held every month and each is followed by a 360 review to ensure quality. NK would like to find funding to help the programme continue. Marketing in Herefordshire has not been as good as other areas so that take up is not as good as it could be.

The Growth Voucher scheme is a proposition from Government who have a pot of £20m which they want to use for business support and research. They have asked for proposals from the private sector and consultancies and JC with the Marches LEP and partners have put forward a proposal.

Goldman Sachs

RG informed the board that the Goldman Sachs growth programme is still running and is barrier free and free of charge. Several Herefordshire businesses have taken part and there is on going support to alumni after the programme is completed. <http://www.10ksb.aston.ac.uk/> JC stated that the programme has a good reputation and has delivered. Board members are asked to promote this scheme to high growth business MD's that they feel could benefit – contact RG

Hereford Enterprise Zone

NK is now a Vice-Chair on the EZ board. RP also has a place on the board. The structures are now in place and the board meets every two months. The MD is Mark Pearce and the team is working from an office at Rotherwas.

The team are working on several strong leads, the Masterplan is in place and marketing is happening including the UK and overseas. RP informed the Board that HC is planning to build some small 100sqft + units for rental market on land to the edge of the EZ.

There is a non-displacement policy in place so Herefordshire businesses wanting to relocate to the EZ would have to evidence their growth potential. JC made an offer to make links for the EZ with the foreign trade boards.

Sustainable Energy Project

RG is working on an electricity generation plant and district heating project based at and serving the EZ. It will use treated sewage, biomass, chicken litter and short fibre paper plan to create energy. The offer to EZ businesses will be a 10% saving on other local energy offers. The project will cost in the region of £60m and the next phase is getting the planning and permits which will take about 2 years.

7. AOB

NK highlighted that there is a need to ensure integration between the Herefordshire Economic Strategy and the Marches LEP Growth Plan and EU Investment Strategy. RP confirmed that the EU Investment strategy has to be presented to Government in draft form by September 2013. The Marches LEP Board must firm up its Growth Plan and link it to the EU Investment Strategy.

JC is involved in the task and finish group for business support. There are also groups for other topics such as skills and employability, research and development. The HBB will be asked to contribute as work progresses. JC has spoken to Mark Schnieder of WM Councils who have collated the data for the Marches and Herefordshire which supports the Investment Strategy, and questioned if there is a need to lobby or account manage with civil servants in London.

NR pointed out that DEFRA are also part of the Investment Strategy (this round of EU funding matches RDPE, ESF and ERDF) and they are keen to work more closely with the LEPs. NR has represented the Marches at the rural LEP network. One of the projects being considered is a national water project for the LEPs.

RP responded to a question about rural broadband. The contract has been signed with BT and they are beginning to roll out the fibre provision. EZ (and some other centres) have not been viewed as a priority by BT so questions need to be asked about timescales for key locations in the County. RP to ask Cllr Graham Powell to provide an update for the Board.

RG has convened a meeting for the three Business Board Chairs to meet and discuss ways of working together better. The Chair and Vice-Chair election process has been brought

forward so that the new HBB Chair and possibly a vice chair can attend on the 3rd July (or if necessary, the meeting will be postponed).

RG informed the group that HC has commissioned another rail study for the EZ which will be looking at freight and passenger transport. RP confirmed that the study has been commissioned by the EZ Board.

Following discussion it was agreed that the process to elect a new Chair and Vice-Chair was too long so the timetable has been reviewed and the votes must be returned by 23rd June meaning the new Chair and Vice Chairs will be announced on 24th June and take over the role from the 1st July.

8. Items for the next Agenda:

- An update and discussion on the work for the Marches LEP EU Investment Strategy, incusing feedback from the task & finish groups working on the project. RP/NW

9. Date of next meetings:

- Tuesday 23rd July, 4pm,
- Tuesday 10th September, 4pm
- Tuesday 12th November, 4pm