

Herefordshire Business Board (HBB)

Notes / Actions from the Meeting – Monday 15th September 2015

Chaired by: Angela Fitch

Present: Sue Browning (SB), Pilar Cruz (PC), Stephen Eckley (SE), Clare Greener (CG), Christine Hope (CH), John Jones (JJ), Frank Myers (FM), John Read (JR), Linda Smith (LS), Nick Read (NR), Helen Thomas (HT). Nick Webster (NW), Rachel Jones (RJ).

Apologies: Cathy Meredith (CM), Mike Ashton (MA).

1. Welcome and apologies

AF welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made. Apologies noted.

2. Overview of the Board to date

AF gave an overview of the previous Board. There had been a mini-refresh a year ago with some new membership but the previous Board had been let go and the three representative organisations (Chamber, FSB, Rural Hub) were charged with finding new members.

The HBB has a role to feed information up to the Marches LEP (MLEP), the Chair of the HBB will have a seat on the MLEP Board, and bring information back from the MLEP to the HBB and the wider business community in Herefordshire. Herefordshire needs a strong board and a strong Chair to represent Herefordshire at the MLEP Board.

Previous HBBs have had some successes, the Hereford Enterprise Zone, involvement with the Hereford BID but the MLEP has not been a particularly strong lead to date. The MLEP is currently recruiting an executive and management team so changes are underway.

3. Plans for the future of the Board

The HBB aim is to support county businesses, cascade information, news, questionnaires, etc. so the role has not changed from previous board iterations but needs to be functional have better communications with businesses. It is the job of the HBB to let businesses know the opportunities available and to cascade information to their networks and feed information back in to the local authority, LEP, Government, Europe. The representative organisations have a bigger role in this board; to use their wider networks to help inform HBB and local authority and report back to their networks.

Wider strategic links are important and the HBB can help consult, shape and take part in discussions and influence and sense-check information and strategies coming forward. The MLEP will be the conduit for devolving funding to priorities in the region for economic benefit and a strong HBB will help position Herefordshire to argue, influence and bring power and benefits – should be backed by strong views on what is needed in Herefordshire with supporting evidence base.

The local authority must take the HBB seriously and HBB can help the council shape its policy. HBB must be clear on what business needs and be able to inform the MLEP, the council and be in the right place, with the supporting evidence when opportunities arise – so Herefordshire wins more in the future. This HBB needs to re-establish Herefordshire in the MLEP. The HBB should match its work with that of the Economic Strategy of for the County.

HBB meets every two months *before* the MLEP Boards so they have an opportunity to review LEP Board papers and compile the HBB response or view in time for the LEP Board meeting. The Leader of the Council or a named representative should attend HBB meetings in the future.

4. Early selection of new Board members

The people in the room have been nominated by one of the representative organisations with the aim of getting a wide degree of representation and accountability to the Herefordshire business community as a whole.

The HBB Chair will have a seat on the MLEP Board, as does the Leader of Herefordshire Council and Chair of the Enterprise Zone. It was agreed that all representatives need to understand each others concerns a have a shared vision so briefings between HBB (Chair and 2 x Vice-Chairs), Leader of the Council, Chair of the EZ will be set up in line with HBB and LEP Board meetings. The Chair and Vice-Chairs will be supported in their roles by the representative organisation and local authority reps.

Action: All invitees to consider if they would like to be part of the new HBB and to confirm to AF by 26th September. **ALL**

Action: Invitees to inform AF if they are interested in sitting as Chair or one of the two Vice-Chair roles. **ALL**

Action: Invitees to let AF know if they have other business connections who they think may be interested in a place on the HBB. **ALL**

Action: FM volunteered to represent the HBB at the next MLEP meeting on the 22nd September, NW to inform LEP Board and brief FM before the meeting. **FM/NW**

Action: The new MLEP Director to be invited to future HBB Meetings. **RJ**

5. Any other business

The group discussed raising the profile of HBB, better communications and improving the image of the Board in Herefordshire and more widely

Action: Item for next agenda **RJ**

UKTI export week is in November. There is an opportunity to hold events in Herefordshire next year targeting our sectors or specific industries.

CH sits on the Rural and Farming Network (RFN) and has twice-yearly Ministerial meetings with DAFRA, the next being in October. The main issue coming forward from their groups is around rural broadband and they will be feeding that up.

The Chief Executive of Herefordshire Council has proposed creating a Herefordshire Master Plan to make Herefordshire stand out as a place to invest and do business. The plan is to include projects from the local authority but more importantly those plans and opportunities which local businesses and organisations are planning and capture all the opportunities and ideas. It will be a 15 year plan broken down into 5 year segments and will be a living document, with regular updates as new information comes forward.

NW is project managing the Master Plan and some working groups have been proposed with leads from the private sector supported by a local authority officer. This is a good opportunity for the HBB to be involved.

Action: To be an item on the next HBB agenda **RJ**

Facts and figures about Herefordshire: <http://factsandfigures.herefordshire.gov.uk/>

6. Date of Next Meeting:

To be confirmed.

The next Marches LEP Board is currently pencilled in for 24th November with papers available 13th November – the HBB meeting to be arranged to coincide with this.

7. Close