

Herefordshire Business Board (HBB)

Notes / Actions from the Meeting held on Monday 1 June 2020, 4-5.30 pm via Zoom

Chair: Frank Myers (FM) **Present:** Abigail Appleton (AA); Christian Dangerfield (CD), Debbie Gittoes (DG), Doug Barrat (DB), Gareth Williams (GW), Helen Bowden (HB), Ian Peake (IP), John Reed (JR), Karen Usher (KU), Nic Millington (NM), Paul Stevens, Sharon Smith (SS); Stephen Eckley (SE),

In attendance: Cllr Ellie Chowns (EC), Gill Hamer (GH), Roger Allonby (RA)

Apologies: Cllr David Hitchiner, Mark Pearce

Minutes: Jan Bailey (JB)

1. Welcome

FM welcomed everyone to today's meeting. Special welcome was given to PS who as Chair of Hereford BID is now a member of the Business Board

Apologies were as noted above.

There were no Declarations of Interest.

2. Minutes of the last meetings

The minutes of the Herefordshire Business Board meeting held on 3 February 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

The minutes of the two Emergency Herefordshire Business Board meetings, held on 23 April and 19 May via Zoom were also agreed as a correct record.

3. Matters arising

3.1 Invitations to Ben Godfrey (Western Power), Russell Pryce (Hereford Construction Industry Lobby Group) and Jack Powell (Herefordshire Young Professionals) will be held over until more normal times resume.

3.2 **Carbon Reduction Steering Group** – HB has not been involved in any discussions since she was nominated at the February Business Board meeting to join this group. This item will be revisited at a future Business Board meeting.

3.3 **Transport Strategy** – A major consultation is underway. A report has been circulated to all Business Board members. This is of great importance to

Herefordshire businesses and FM urged all members to submit their feedback to him (via JB) by Monday 8 June.

FM regretted that the timeframe the council had given for response was shamefully short. This view had been shared with the council and a short extension granted. The Board requested that FM approach Cllr John Harrington to request an extraordinary meeting in which he (JH) could provide further information and the opportunity for questions from the Board. This would enable the Board to make a considered response. FM agreed to do this.

Action 1: All members to review document and submit comments to JB

Action 2: FM to speak to Cllr Harrington to request extraordinary meeting

3.4 **Sheriff's Skills** - FM provided an update, the main point being that the High Sheriff, Tricia Thomas had decided to run a schools' competition for year groups 6 and 7. This will ask children to focus on what they'd like to be when they grow up and how they would plan to get there. FM advised that the LEP had agreed for JB to provide administrative support to the Sheriff's project, as required, as preparing young people for work is a key objective of the LEP and of the Business Board.

4. Marches Investment Fund (MIF)

FM provided an update on progress to date. Following a number of full meetings of the Business Board and sub-committee, a business case had been submitted to the LEP which focused primarily on supporting Herefordshire's tourism industry.

The business case has now been approved by the LEP and work will start to roll out the plan. GH confirmed that the deadline for spending the fund was flexible, but must not be later than 31 March 2021.

JB was asked to circulate the business case to all Business Board members. Members were asked, however, not to share this with anyone else at this stage – and particularly not any members of the press – as a full press launch is planned for the future.

The Business Board thanked RA for his significant work in pulling the business case together.

Action 3: JB to circulate business case to all Business Board members

5. Marches LEP update

GH advised that the LEP had been holding fortnightly meetings with Business Board chairs in order that the LEP Chair could understand the issues facing local businesses. These meetings are important as the Chair meets regularly with other LEP chairs and Government ministers and can lobby on the most important issues being faced by local businesses.

The LEP has been keen to raise awareness of the Growth Hub website, where local businesses can find a comprehensive summary of all support programmes available to those affected by the pandemic. GH requested that all members continue to raise awareness of this site: <https://www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk/>

GH advised that the Marches LEP Board had met recently (26 May) and that a recovery plan was discussed. This will be circulated to the Business Board members for consultation as soon as it's available. RA added that Hereford Council is also working with many different groups to develop a coordinated recovery plan for the county.

FM stressed that it was important that whenever he attends the LEP meetings he is aware of Business Board members' views and opinions. Please therefore keep telling him what you think.

6. Stronger Towns Fund

RA advised that actions were being taken to finalise the board and sub-board structure to work on a city investment fund proposal. Public consultation and engagement events will be part of the process and Jessie Norman MP has been asked for his availability. Further details will be advised as available.

7. NMITE

KU advised that due to COVID19 the first intake of students to the University will not now start until January 2021. 50-75 students are expected in January, increasing to 200-250 later in the year. Comprehensive academic plans are in place.

KU confirmed that final funding had been received from Central Government and that the University had been very successful in raising additional private funding during the COVID crisis. This secures the University's future until the end of 2021, together with around 200 letters of agreement it had received from local, regional and national businesses.

8. Horizon scan

Herefordshire Discretionary Grants Fund – RA advised that this scheme was primarily to help those businesses who had 'fallen between the cracks' of other

COVID support schemes. For example, businesses that are in shared premises, bed and breakfasts that pay Council Tax, market traders and charities.

RA advised that the council is now looking at how best to launch the scheme in order to prioritise those businesses who are most in need of funding.

RA will let Business Board members know as soon as the fund is available.

8. Any Other Business

8.1 **Herefordshire Investment Partnership** – DB provided an update on recent investment grant applications stating that the investment group was pleased that there is still appetite for operating and investment in Herefordshire.

DB provided an update on recent news coverage stating that the council was buying Maylord Orchards in Hereford. DB advised that a deal had not yet been agreed but negotiations were ongoing. He regretted that these confidential discussions had been made public. It was emphasised that these observations must remain confidential.

8.2 **Herefordshire Council representation on Herefordshire Business Board** – After discussion, it was agreed that Herefordshire Council would have one permanent, voting member on the Herefordshire Business Board. At present, this place is occupied by Cllr Hitchiner.

It was also agreed that this permanent member could request a substitute to attend in his place, if he is unavailable.

It was further agreed that this permanent member could request other officers from the council to attend particular meetings, as appropriate, as observers / presenters / contributors but with no voting rights.

FM requested that the permanent member keeps JB informed prior to meetings who would be attending from the Council.

8.3 **Retail / Night-time Economy** – PS advised that meetings are ongoing to consider how Herefordshire's night-time economy returns.

8.4 **National Emergencies Trust / Herefordshire Community Foundation** – FM reminded members that money is available from the National Emergencies Trust (via Herefordshire CF) to support organisations in crisis. He asked all Business Board members to let others know about this.

8.5 **Hereford and Ludlow College** – IP provided an update. New teaching arrangements are working well at the moment, but there are concerns around how the next academic year will operate. There are still many unknowns.

IP further advised that he would be leaving the college in August 2020.

9. Dates of Next Meetings: 27 July, 5 October, 30 November