

Herefordshire Business Board (HBB)
Notes/Actions from the meeting held on
Monday 3 October 2022, 4.00 – 6.00 pm
At Hereford and Ludlow College, Hereford

Chair: Frank Myers MBE (FM) **Present:** Abigail Appleton (AA), Christian Dangerfield (CD), David Hitchiner (DH); David Williams (DW), Doug Barrat (DB), Gareth Williams (GW), Helen Bowden (HB), James Newby (JN), Nic Millington (NM), Sharon Smith (SS), Stephen Eckley (SE)

In attendance: Roger Allonby, Herefordshire Council (RA).

Guest speakers: Prof Gary Wood (GW), Natasha Tait, Toby Street (NMITE)

Apologies: Christine Snell, Debbie Gittoes, John Reed, Rachel Laver (RL), Mark Pearce, Paul Stevens

Minutes: Jan Bailey (JB)

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. He thanked DW for hosting and for the tour that preceded.

2. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies are as noted above. There were no new Declarations of Interest.

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting (held 1 August, 2022)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 August 2022 were approved as a correct record.

4. Matters Arising (not covered elsewhere on the Agenda)

4.1 The Chair confirmed that a letter had been sent to Elena Rodriguez-Falcon on behalf of HBB to send best wishes on her new appointment and to thank her for her contribution to NMITE.

4.2 The Chair confirmed that arrangements for the Shrieval Lecture had been finalised. Details to be circulated to Board members.

Action: JB

4.3 With regard to the Shared Prosperity Fund, consultants Metro Dynamics will be providing a presentation to HBB members at 4 o'clock on Monday 14 November. Further details will be circulated to Board members.

Action: JB

5. NMITE Presentation

5.1 The Chair welcomed NMITE's Professor Gary Wood, Academic Director, and students Natasha Tait and Toby Street to the meeting.

5.2 Professor Wood provided a presentation on NMITE's background and guiding principles. He focused particularly on NMITE's focus on developing work-ready students. He also spoke about the University's aim to attract students into engineering who had not followed traditional pathways associated with studying for engineering degrees. Professor Wood provided an outline of the University's current portfolio and aspirations for the future and explained its aim to integrate closely with local employers.

5.3 The two students continued with a presentation based on their own experiences at NMITE and in particular how studying for an engineering degree at the university differed from traditional institutions. Of particular note was the way study times modelled the workplace (Monday to Friday, 9-5), the programme of study that meant one module was completed at a time, emphasis on teamworking and close links with industry.

5.4 The Chair invited comments and queries from Board members. The following were noted:

5.4.1 AA asked how attendance was monitored by the university. Guest speakers explained that although not specifically monitored, class sizes were such that regular non-attendance would be noted and raised with the student(s).

5.4.2 DB asked for more information regarding relationships with employers. GW replied that there are various levels of employer involvement and the University was keen to engage with all employers so as to ensure relationships were in place to meet current and future curriculum needs.

5.4.3 CD asked how the City of Hereford could help to enhance the student experience. The students replied that developing relationships with local businesses, for example to offer discounted services or designated student nights would be welcomed.

5.4.4 SE asked the students how they had heard about NMITE and what had encouraged them to attend. The students replied that this was mostly to do with social media and NMITE open days. They said that current students are encouraged to return to their old schools and colleges to promote the university. It was noted that there are challenges to do with parental pressures to attend traditional institutions, whilst recognising that the NMITE model wasn't suitable for everyone. JN/DW will discuss the possibility of joint marketing opportunities.

Action: JN/DW

6. Stronger Towns Fund

6.1 AA advised that confirmation had recently been received of funding (£22.4 Million) for all Projects in Hereford's Stronger Towns Fund bid. The next stage she said was for the Board and the Accountable Body (Herefordshire Council) to sign Funding Agreements with all 15 Project owners.

6.2 AA advised that the biggest challenge facing the projects was to do with cost escalation. She confirmed that all projects were now engaged in dialogue with Rose

Regeneration (Hereford STF Project Consultants) and the Project Delivery Group (PDG) to look at value engineering and mitigations, whilst ensuring that the project outcomes laid out in the projects' Full Business Cases (FBCs) were not compromised.

6.3 The Chair advised that projects were also being encouraged to investigate possible other funding streams and grant application opportunities.

6.4 AA confirmed that she will be compiling a STF Milestones Summary which will be circulated to HBB Board members.

Action: AA

6.5 The Chair advised that STF is looking for youth members to join its Board. JN said he would share this opportunity with NMITE students.

Action: JN

7. Marches LEP

7.1 RL had sent her apologies for today's meeting, but an update from her was circulated with the Agenda.

7.2 GW provided information on a £4million fund recently allocated to the LEP for energy projects. He advised that 19 applications had been shortlisted, out of which three had been approved by the LEP Board. The successful projects focused respectively on i) skills ii) extension of a grant scheme focusing on environmental measures and efficiencies and iii) work to increase grid capacity to accommodate more energy from renewable sources.

7.3 DW welcomed the investment in skills, which would enable the college to provide MCS accredited training programmes for green energy installations.

7.4 SS confirmed that H&W Chamber would be working with Shropshire Chamber to deliver the Herefordshire element of the Local Skills Investment Plan. She advised that a delivery plan was due for submission today (3 October) and that she had already been meeting regularly with local colleges. Further engagement activities will take place with employers and educators in the forthcoming weeks and months.

7.4 AA asked SS to ensure that local arts and other specialist colleges are included in any consultation activities. NM asked whether the plan is cross-sector. SS replied that it is but that certain key areas have been emphasised. SS encouraged all present to contact her to get involved. DW advised that colleges are already planning to hold a briefing meeting to discuss how they could work together. He will send details to SS.

Action: DW

8. Horizon Scan

8.1 RA referred to a paper previously circulated to members regarding the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (see also 4.3 above). He advised that a plan will be signed

off at the end of October, which will provide £800K to be spent by the end of March, followed by an additional allocation to cover the following two years.

8.2 RA referred to information on the Rural Prosperity Fund which had been circulated to Board members prior to today's meeting. £1.7M funding is available from this fund, mainly focusing on business support. RA will circulate a draft plan to members for comment. Submission date for the final plan is end of November 2022.

Action: RA

8.3 RA provided information on the new Investment Zones recently announced by Government. Expressions of Interest are requested by 14 October and RA advised that the local authority will be looking at the criteria and options available. He stressed that no new money is being offered via this scheme, just additional tax incentives.

9. Herefordshire Investment Partnership

9.1 DB advised applications to the Marches Business Investment Grant fund continued to be strong for Herefordshire. He hoped that additional funds would be available when the current scheme expires.

10. Sector Updates

10.1 Individual members provided updates from their sectors. Please refer to Annexe 1.

11. Any Other Business

11.1 The Chair advised that he is frequently being approached with requests to create one entity to represent Herefordshire business interests (including the voluntary sector). This matter to be further considered/discussed

11.2 Members welcomed the opportunity to tour the college premises before today's HBB meeting and requested future meetings follow this model. JB to arrange.

Action: JB

12. Dates of Next Meetings

Monday 5 December, 4.00 – 6.00 at Hereford College of Arts, College Road Campus HR1 1EB

2023: Provisional Dates (venues to be confirmed) – all 4.00 – 6.00 pm

- Monday 30 January
- Monday 27 March
- Monday 5 June
- Monday 24 July
- Monday 2 October
- Monday 4 December

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Annexe 1 – Sector Updates

1. Manufacturing

(SE)

- Mixed market conditions
- Supply chain shortages, delayed deliveries
- Price increases, but venture capitalists still interested in investing in medicines
- Weak sterling affecting imports, especially from the USA. BUT more competitive for export markets.
- Energy – Europe – concerning. The Government's 6 month cap makes no difference to business as they plan up to 2 years in advance.
- Recruitment – positive. Big shift seen in recent months, apart from very specialist roles.

(DG – via email)

- Staff shortages (of all levels and skills)
- Supply chain shortages
- Beginning to see customers trying to cancel orders due to concerns about the economy and recession, with obvious impacts on turnover

FM

- Public expenditure, emergency services, global slowdown

2. Energy (GW)

- Energy prices rocketing, renewables cheaper but demand outstrips capacity
- Grant application notifications from the LEP welcomed. MSC standard training highly significant development
- Ongoing skills shortage

3. Creative Industries

(HB)

- No issues of note. Worry regarding the future and impact on customer demand

(NM)

- Arts Council investment – outcome of next three year contract expected 26 October

- NM and RA recently involved in appointment of new Director of Museums for Herefordshire

4. Education

(DW)

- Numbers for 16-18 years olds stable, 19+ numbers lower this year
- Apprenticeships very healthy
- Energy costs – lots of uncertainty after April

(AA)

- Similar to DW re Further Education; Higher Education badly hit by Covid, now showing some recovery.
- Returned to London UCAS fair. Big push on Destination Hereford: 'Different Culture, Different Place'.

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Action Log

Minute	Action	Responsibility
4.2	Circulate details of Shrieval Lecture	JB
4.3	Circulate details of SPF event on 14 November	JB
5.4.4	Discuss possibility of joint marketing activities	DW/JN
6.4	STF Milestones Summary – creation and circulation	AA
6.5	Remind students of STF Board Youth Representation opportunity	JN
7.4	Send details of SIF colleges meeting to SS	DW
8.2	Circulate draft Rural Prosperity Fund plan for comment	RA
11.2	Set up schedule of meetings/venues for future HBB	JB

Items for future Agenda

Minute	Item	Meeting Date
11.1	One Herefordshire Business Forum	TBC