

Herefordshire Business Board (HBB)
Notes/Actions from the meeting held on
Monday 5 December 2022, 4.00 – 6.00 pm
At Hereford and Ludlow College, Hereford

Attendees

Chair: Frank Myers MBE (FM) **Present:** Abigail Appleton (AA), Christian Dangerfield (CD); David Williams (DW), Debbie Gittoes (DG), Doug Barrat (DB), Gareth Williams (GW), Helen Bowden (HB), James Newby (JN), Nic Millington (NM), Paul Stevens (PS), Stephen Eckley (SE)

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

Guest speakers: Patrick White, Metrodynamics Consultancy (PW)

Apologies: Christine Snell, David Hitchiner, John Reed, Mark Pearce, Rachel Laver, Sharon Smith, Stephen Eckley

Minutes: Jan Bailey (JB)

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

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

3. Minutes of Previous Meetings (14 November and 3 October)

Deferred until next meeting (30 January 2023).

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

Not applicable.

5. Herefordshire's Big Economic Plan

5.1 The Chair welcomed Patrick White from Metrodynamics Consultancy who was at the meeting to seek Business Board's views on Herefordshire's Big Economic Plan. Today's discussions were a continuation of those held at the previous additional Board Meeting on 14 November, including the importance of pursuing a new, purposeful partnership between business, political leaders and other anchor institutions.

5.2 PW referred to the working draft document, 'Herefordshire Big Economic Plan', circulated to Board members in advance of today's meeting. He advised that a further version would be produced after comments from today's Board meeting, and discussions would continue at Steering Group and Cabinet in the new year.

5.3 PW further advised that some changes to the circulated version had been made following recent feedback from the Steering Group. In particular, it had been agreed to include a section on connectivity and transport issues.

5.4 The Chair invited comments from Board members on the content of the report. The following key points were noted:

5.4.1 The importance of encouraging people to remain and come to the county. This includes engagement with parents and schools to demonstrate the opportunities available within the county and a skills strategy. Board members recognised that changes in working patterns provide opportunities to encourage people to live in the county even if employment was based elsewhere.

5.4.2 Associated with this, the importance of encouraging inward investment to the county and recognition of Herefordshire's geographical location and potential strategic partnerships, eg with Bristol, Birmingham and Cardiff.

5.4.3 Board members were keen to stress their commitment to a carbon neutral agenda. However, they expressed concerns about the plan's over-emphasis on a green agenda that didn't recognise the importance of proper road infrastructure as critical to the county's future growth ambitions. Members said there is a need to get the balance right, whilst encouraging green practices and business growth. Indeed, tackling some of the environmental challenges could offer business development opportunities for county businesses.

5.4.4 More detail needed on how to improve rural landscapes, not just the towns.

5.4.5 Insufficient emphasis on the importance of tourism, sports and physical well-being, plus the need for proper health and healthcare resources for families, and a housing strategy.

5.4.6 Explicit content required to encourage a more positive approach to planning.

5.4.7 Greater recognition needed for the development of an energy plan, eg investment in grid connectivity.

5.5 RA provided some context for the document. In particular, that it was aiming to provide a non-political, 'election proof' strategy with an agreed vision for the county. Underpinning the document, he said, would be delivery plans that included economic strategy, transport, housing, etc, whilst recognising that these were inter-dependent and the boundaries often blurred. He said today's discussions provided the opportunity for Board members to influence the future direction for the county.

5.6 AA asked about future population targets, which she said would be needed to model the future impact on all services. PS advised that Herefordshire's population is currently ageing faster than other areas in the country. It was recognised that this would have big implications for a plan that is predicated on growth and that this issue should be specifically addressed. For example, this could be by including provision for training and development opportunities for older people to ensure they are economically as active for as long as possible and by recognising the value that older people bring to the workplace.

5.7 JN asked how success would be measured. PW referred to pages 26 and 27 of the circulated report where metrics are identified. JN suggested that targets should be carefully stated to capture progress against key areas suggested in today's earlier discussions and 'what matters most' for Herefordshire, eg skills levels, working age

population, earnings, business growth, number of start ups, high growth businesses, etc. PW referred to pages 14-24 of the circulated report where priorities and five year actions against six headings (People, Community & Partnerships, Enterprise, Infrastructure, Environment and Climate Change, and Investments) are outlined. The Chair stated that one of the first priorities of the partnership group would be to confirm these priorities and realistic timescales, recognising that some ambitions would need significant investment and a long-term commitment.

5.8 The Chair emphasised that the key to achieving the vision for the future was an effective private/public sector partnership between stakeholders and the local authority. Members discussed what this could mean in practice. CD advised that there are many 'best practice' examples in the country of where this relationship has worked and that could be incorporated into Herefordshire's plans. The Chair stressed the importance of creating an inclusive new entity that is not perceived to be controlled by the Local Authority. This principle was supported by all present.

5.9 Following further discussion, it was agreed that PW would convene a group to meet early in 2023 to discuss:

- What the new entity would be trying to achieve
- How they would be trying to do this
- What skills/attributes would therefore be needed on the newly constituted body

Action: PW

6. Any Other Business

6.1 With reference to DG's position as HBB representative on the Local Skills Investment Partnership (LSIP), the Chair asked members to send information on any particular skills gaps they have identified within their businesses to JB for collation and forwarding to DG.

Action: All

7. Dates of Next Meetings

Monday 30 January 2023, 4.00 – 6.00 pm, venue tbc.

Followed by (all 4.00 – 6.00 pm, venues tbc):

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

Herefordshire Business Board (HBB)
Meeting held on Monday 5 December 2023

Action Log

Minute	Action	Responsibility
5.9	PW to convene working group to discuss private/public partnership	PW
6.1	All to send information on skills shortages to JB	All