

**Herefordshire Business Board (HBB)
Notes/Actions from the meeting held on
Monday 5 June 2023, 4.00 – 6.00 pm
Caplor Farm, Fownhope, Hereford HR1 4PT**

Attendees

Chair: Frank Myers MBE (FM) **Present:** Abigail Appleton (AA), Christian Dangerfield (CD), Christine Snell (CS), David Williams (DW), Doug Barrat (DB), Gareth Williams (GW), Helen Bowden (HB), James Newby (JB), Nic Millington (NM), Stephen Eckley (SE)

In attendance: Nadine Kinsey (NK), Rachel Laver (RL), Tanya Cunningham (TC)

Apologies: David Hitchiner (DH), John Reed (JR), Mark Pearce (MP), Paul Stevens (PS), Sharon Smith (SS), Roger Allonby (RA).

Minutes: Sian Hill (SH).

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 Meeting (27 March 2023)

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 March were agreed as a correct record.

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

None.

5. Caplor Farm

5.1 GW advised that the energy plan is being completed by the Marches and encouraged others to think of Phase 2 of the project.

5.2 GW briefly reminded all that energy is still twice as expensive as last year, despite coming down recently.

6. Herefordshire Council update including Economy and Place Board (HEPB)

6.1 The Chair advised that one action point, associated with the Economy and Place board from the previous meeting hasn't been completed due to new changes in Council administration.

6.2 The Chair discussed the new board, terms of reference and recruitment process. Also highlighted that, following suggestions, his name has been forward to be Chair of the board. Requested the council to update as there has been no further communications regarding this. NK confirmed that shortlisting should be complete in the next couple of weeks, but firstly the selection panel is to be reviewed. New dates will be released, along with shortlisting papers.

6.3 The Chair asked NK if the new cabinet has endorsed this economic plan and process. NK couldn't clarify as hasn't been party to the conversation, but it has been taken to cabinet.

7. Update on skills

7.1 DW advised that LSIP is now submitted and with DFE for approval and that they are working with other colleges to all specialise and fill the gaps.

7.2 RL explained that there are some reservations in the process but will continue to support. RL went on to explain Level 3 Skills Development bootcamps, which have very positive reviews, and would like to use these to fill any gaps. It's possible to create a bootcamp with 15 participants only, and ultimately lead to employment with businesses involved in the project. It's possible to bid for £1million to £1.5million. RL suggested focusing on 1. green skills (to complement technology) at Herefordshire and Ludlow College, 2. Shrewsbury and Telford hospitals have shortages and 3. Cyber Security for the Cyber Security centre in Hereford. RL stressed the point that employment at the end is essential, and so employer engagement is important, and targeting those who struggle to employ would be ideal.

7.3 DW stated that £2.5 million is allocated over two years to LEP and Marches area. The bid can only be led by FE colleges (either HLC or Telford), who then become administrators of projects for other organisations. DW suggested this bid is not a huge amount for the size of the area and recommended that instead of having multiple smaller projects, the cost could be concentrated on 2-3 areas, giving approximately £1million to each – colleges are meeting Thursday to discuss.

8. Stronger Towns Funds

8.1 AA gave an update on the Stronger Town Funds, including the more proactive external communications, Castle Green and the cycle track by Halo.

8.2 AA noted that the brand is now 'Stronger Hereford' instead of Stronger Towns.

8.3 AA posed the question of how the success of the momentum behind Stronger Hereford can help with the wider economic plan to show ability to deliver. The point was made that these experiences could put Hereford in good stead for the City of Culture bid in 2029 as it has helped with infrastructure and how to present the case. Additionally, initial funding was £22.4 million, which, with matched funding, is £40 million. This will have massive transformational effect.

8.4 NM questioned where culture fits in the cabinet and pointed out that it's important

that it fits with one directorate as there were problems last time. NK confirmed that it will be in the cabinet brief, and she can find out.

Post meeting note: It sits with Cllr Harry Bramer, Cabinet Member, Community Services and Assets.

Action: NK

9. Horizon Scan

9.1 NK gave an update on the Horizon Scan and recommended board members keep an eye on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

9.2 A question was asked whether it included multiple (or multiply) funding – start date in July – as worried about spending the cash or shorter time frame.

9.3 The issue of transport connectivity for rural areas, and subsequent employment issues, was discussed. The LEP as part of its transport work had arranged for Midlands Connect and the Dept for Transport colleagues to come to the Marches for three days, visiting each of the local authority areas to familiarise themselves with the areas and understand the transport challenges. Aecom will finish their work on the transport priorities for the whole area at the end of July and then this will be used to inform and support bids for transport funding.

10. Marches LEP

10.1 RL updated that while there is uncertainty, there has been no decision to remove. There will be continued funds in the bank and requested that if there is anything they can be doing for business, please let them know. The intention is to sell the Marches as the 'green lungs' of the west midlands. LEP is funding a local area energy plan.

10.2 RL requested GW to talk at an event being held in September. GW to confirm.

Action: GW

10.3 A question was asked whether MEIF have invested any money in Hereford. RL confirmed that there has been funding in the Marches.

10.4 It was also questioned whether the LEP can continue and restart the business investment grant scheme, as it's done a lot of good and lots of SMEs took advantage. RL explained that once LEP stops, local authority will take over. There is a focus on what will be left out if that happens. These areas can be concentrated on and continue as a different entity – potentially becoming a limited company generating its own resources. It was asked what will be lost if LEP closes and the local authority takes over. As some think it's not the way forward. RL advised this would be a question for the next meeting.

11. NMITE

11.1 JN gave an update on the increased student population, discussed regulatory challenges (mental health charter, quality assurance process and international student restrictions), and announced upcoming events. FM recommended speaking to Wye Valley Trust for mental health and welcoming foreign students. Colleges are affected by mental health charter also, FM recommended working together.

11.2 JN offered a space for the Level 3 Skills Development bootcamps should they wish to have an inspiring environment.

11.3 It was questioned what the gender split was at NMITE. JN confirmed one third female, which is higher than most engineering universities. However, one intake could change this as it's a small population size.

11.4 CS questioned if NMITE was financially stable yet. JN responded that currently they're not but should be when they reach a student population of 250-350, which should take 2-3 years, and marketing and fundraising is key to achieving this. There is a focus on Malaysia for a potential target country.

11.5 It was questioned what % intake is from Herefordshire. JN confirmed it is 40% but can check for the next intake.

12. Herefordshire Investment Partnership

12.1 DB gave an update and drew particular attention to the success of the redundant buildings investment grant scheme which had now ceased.

13. Sector Updates

13.1 SE gave an update on the manufacturing sector. Explaining that was nothing different to report compared with the last meeting.

13.2 NM gave an update on the creative industries sector, upcoming projects, and mentioned cultural strategy and where that sits with administration. Also mentioned creating an independent board and foundation to attract investment and to restore relationships between council and city.

13.2 AA asked how we can better educate students on entrepreneurship and suggested there is a crossover between public festivals and educational opportunities and gave the successful example of the academic print and design exhibition linking with interior designers.

13.3 CS gave an Agriculture sector update, there was discussion about levels of phosphate in the river, and in particular the challenge of recruiting a suitable workforce.

13.4 CS mentioned a project with national grid to help with substation capacity and investigating getting a mini grid.

13.5 CD gave an update on the tourism sector. Also suggested Rule of Tum come and speak or perhaps offer for them to join the board due to the success of their business and their demographic of younger people.

14. Any Other Business

None

14. Dates of Next Meetings

- **Monday 24 July, Windmill Hill Farm, Hereford – 4-6 pm (with tour from 3pm)**
- **Monday 2 October** (details tbc)
- **Monday 4 December** (details tbc)

Action Log

Minute	Action	Responsibility
8.4	Find out where culture sits within the newly constituted cabinet	NK
10.2	Confirm availability to speak at Marches LEP event	GW

Future Herefordshire Business Board Meetings 2023

All 4.00 – 6.00 pm

Monday 24 July (Windmill Hill Farm, Hereford)

Monday 2 October (venue tbc)

Monday 4 December (venue tbc)