

Herefordshire Business Board (HBB)
Notes/Actions from the meeting held on
Monday 24 July 2023, 4.00 – 6.00 pm
Windmill Hill Farm, Harewood End, Hereford HR2 8JS

Attendees

Chair: Frank Myers MBE (FM) **Present:** Abigail Appleton (AA), Christian Dangerfield (CD), Christine Snell (CS), Gareth Williams (GW), Cllr Graham Biggs (GB); Helen Bowden (HB), John Reed (JR), Paul Stevens (PS), Sharon Smith (SS)

In attendance: Mark Schneider (MS); Roger Allonby (RA)

Apologies: David Williams, Doug Barrat, James Newby, Cllr Jonathan Lester, Mark Pearce, Nic Millington, Rachel Laver, Stephen Eckley

Minutes: Jan Bailey

Action Log

Minute	Action	Responsibility
6.6	Provide update on Big Economic Plan timelines for delivery	GB
5.4 / Appendix A	CS to share information on solar panel planning issues with GW	CS/GW

		Action
1.	<p>Welcome</p> <p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. A special welcome was extended to Cllr Graham Biggs who is the newly-elected Herefordshire Council Cabinet Member for Economy and Growth and was attending today's meeting on behalf of Cllr Lester</p> <p>The Chair thanked CS for her hospitality and the very interesting tour of Windmill Farm that preceded today's meeting.</p>	
2.	<p>Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest</p>	

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

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 June were agreed as a correct record, apart from an amendment to point 8.3 as follows:

“.....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”

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

It was confirmed that both actions from the last meeting had been completed. There were no new matters arising.

5. Windmill Hill Farm

5.1 CS presented a film called “Fruit Farming in Four Seasons” that provided an overview of the range of activities carried out at Windmill Hill Farm throughout the seasons.

5.2 CS then made a presentation on how Windmill Hill Farm had been established in 1989 and how it had grown from its origins as a vegetable farm to a fruit growing farm. She also provided information on the business’ organisational structure and key personnel, as well as giving an overview of production at the farm, opportunities and risks for the future.

5.3 In response to a query from PS, CS confirmed that the vast majority of their production was destined for supermarkets. She added that due to its perishable nature, the price secured for the produce was very much dictated by what the supermarkets were prepared to offer. She added that inflationary pressures had had a significant impact on the Farm’s profitability in the past few years. Also that the main ongoing risks were due to lack of availability of workforce and climate change.

5.4 CS expressed frustration that the farm had been unable to secure consent to install solar energy panels at the farm. GW asked her to spell out the situation to the Business Board so that a representation letter could be sent from the Board which would be helpful with his lobbying efforts.

6. Big Economic Plan including the Economy and Place Board (HEPB)

CS

- 6.1 The Chair asked GB to provide an update on latest developments with regard to appointments to the HEPB.
- 6.2 GB advised that three applicants had been interviewed for the role of Chair of the HEPB (including FM). However, no appointment had been made.
- 6.3 GB further advised that the decision not to appoint a Chair was not to do with the quality of candidates. Rather, it was due to the new cabinet's wish to review the approach to the Big Economic Plan to ensure real value would be delivered to Herefordshire. He also referenced the numerous other boards already in place in the county and a wish not to create increasing levels of complexity or to engender conflict between bodies.
- 6.4 GB advised that he was planning to speak soon with Paul Walker (PW) (Chief Executive of Herefordshire Council) to decide next steps.
- 6.5 The Chair made a comment regarding Herefordshire Business Board potentially being an ideal forum to take forward the Big Economic Plan, with the addition of other partners, eg from the third sector, community sector, etc.
- 6.6 Members expressed concern that a review of the approach could take many months and would delay any action being taken. They asked for further information on proposed timelines. GB said he was unable to provide this information until after his discussions with PW but would be happy to report back to HBB Board when more information is known.
- 6.7 RA reminded members that the Big Economic Plan has been approved and that Herefordshire Council is one contributor alongside other partners. He said that the role of the HEPB would be to bring the right people together to deliver the Plan, and that is still the intention. Forming the right Board, with the right people and background to deliver was imperative and he said did not undermine the role of Herefordshire Business Board as a key partner and influencer.
7. **Stronger Towns Fund**
- 7.1 AA provided an update on #StrongerHereford. In particular that there had been positive coverage of three of the projects in last week's Hereford Times, as well as a supportive letter from Jesse Norman MP.
- 7.2 AA advised Board of the decision taken by the Project Team to pause the Library/Resource Centre project. This is due to a

GB

review taking place of the original planned location (Maylord Orchards). She said that a decision had been taken at Cabinet last week to pursue the alternative location of the Shire Hall, Hereford. A new proposal is now being prepared and will return to Cabinet for discussion in October.

7.3 The Chair added that if the Shire Hall location is not chosen in October, the Maylord Orchards option could be revisited. However, GB stated that this would require work to be retendered due to contracts having expired by that time.

7.4 RA said that five units would be affected in Maylord Orchards if that option is taken. He advised that there is strong current commercial demand for these spaces. However, consideration also needs to be given to longer term usage plans for Maylord Orchards, which could include options not possible within the Shire Hall building, including city centre living.

7.5 AA reminded Board of the Stronger Town Board's responsibilities. These meant that that any plan submitted by the Project Team would have to be carefully considered to ensure it met the Stronger Towns' Project requirements. In particular, that the proposed revised location of the Library/ Resource Centre was sufficiently ambitious and innovative and met or exceeded the original planned objectives.

7.6 The Chair added that the revised plans would also have to be scrutinised by Government officials via a Project Adjustment Request.

8. Horizon Scan

8.1 RA provided a broad overview of several initiatives:

8.1.1 The current County Plan ends in 2024 and work is currently being undertaken to look at priorities for the future. HBB's input will be sought in this regard.

8.1.2 The City Centre Master Plan was developed by the previous administration, so will be revisited by the current administration. The new administration has identified the western by-pass and road improvements, employment land provision, waste management strategy and improvements to children's services as priorities. Also looking at how to generate better paid jobs and challenges around protecting the environment whilst improving the local economy.

8.1.3 The UK Shared Prosperity Fund Festival and Events grant scheme has been over-subscribed in terms of applications.

Creative Industry grants are currently available, with a range of other schemes about to be launched.

8.1.4 The council is also looking to establish a skills provider forum, and hold an event in the autumn to bring employers and skills providers together.

8.1.5 A new Rural Prosperity Fund is being launched soon. Further details to follow.

8.2 GB advised that Cabinet is looking to support skills initiatives at Wye Valley NHS Trust (Learning Resource Centre) and Hereford & Worcester Group Training Association (relocation of current premises). Business cases for both organisations are expected shortly and are expected to link to the Council's objectives of enabling more, better paid jobs in the county.

9. Marches LEP

9.1 MS advised that an announcement from Government regarding the future of LEPs is still outstanding. The Chair expressed concern regarding the possible loss of some valuable services if the LEPs are disbanded.

9.2 MS further advised that the results of a recent transport survey across the three counties are expected to be published at the beginning of August.

10. NMITE

No update provided.

11. Herefordshire Investment Partnership

No update provided.

12. Sector Updates

Please see Appendix A attached.

13. Any Other Business

None

14. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 2 October, 2023, 4.00 – 6.00 pm
Orphan's Press, Leominster Enterprise Park, 3 Arrow Close,
Leominster HR6 0LD

Then Monday 4 December, 2023
Venue tbc



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Appendix A – Sector Updates

- Manufacturing** - **FM:** World market 'dead'
- Energy** - **GW:**
- Very busy
 - Grid continues to be the issue with renewables
 - Government target to generate 5x more solar energy than currently BUT no clarity regarding how this will be done. A task force is due to report on this in February.
 - Looking for case studies to present to forum on Monday.
 - **ACTION:** Link with CS regarding her example (see Minute 5.4 above)
- Creative** - **HB:**
- Challenging operating environment
- AA:**
- Hereford Cultural Partnership Board: understand (from Nic Millington) that is very active at the moment. Linking in with the Arts Council to secure more funding for our area.
 - Revival of Creative Cultural Centre (one of projects that was nearly accepted into the #StrongerHereford): keen to build on discussions regarding linking arts training to industry needs.
 - HCA planning to launch new programmes (through #StrongerHereford funding) particularly to do with gaming
 - Board encouraged to read the Creative Spillover Report previously circulated.
- Tourism** - **CD:**
- Keen to develop 'legacy' for #StrongerHereford project, which could include development of future festival calendar
 - World class infrastructure being developed as part of #StrongerHereford. Need to think about how to capitalise on that.
- Agriculture** - **JR:**
- Similar issues to those identified by Christine in her presentation: inflation, workforce, etc.
 - Ongoing discussions regarding health of the River Wye. Cargill have responded to enquiry/taken actions to mitigate environmental impact of their activities, but frustrations with regard to who is taking integrated approach/forming an action plan to engage all parties.