

Herefordshire Business Board (HBB)
Notes/Actions from the meeting held on
Monday 4 December 2023, 4.00 – 6.00 pm
Hereford and Ludlow College, Folly Lane, Hereford HR1 1LS

Attendees:

Chair: Frank Myers MBE (FM) **Present:** Christian Dangerfield (CD), David Williams (DW); Gareth Williams (GW); Helen Bowden (HB), James Newby (JN); Nic Millington (NM); Paul Stevens (PS), Rachel Laver (RL); Sharon Smith (SS)

In attendance: Nadine Kinsey (NK)

Apologies: Abigail Appleton (AA), Christine Snell, John Reed, Mark Pearce, Roger Allonby (RA), Stephen Eckley

Absent: Cllr Graham Biggs

Minutes: Jan Bailey

Action Log

Minute	Action	Responsibility
5.7	Develop a proposal for the future of Herefordshire Business Board, based on an inward investment partnership model.	FM
7.2.1	Details of portal for interested parties (SPF/RPF) to be shared with Jan for circulation to members.	NK
8.2	Provide promotional materials on Growth Hub for dissemination through Board members' networks.	RL
8.4	Provide details of graduate trainee to RL	NK
9.2	Share information on local bursary opportunity with DW	JN
11.1	'Sustainable Business' to be included as a standing item on all future HBB meeting agendas.	FM/JB
Appendix	Send Public Arts Consultation Strategy document to JB for circulation to Board	NM

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Action

2. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies and absences are as noted above.

The Chair announced that he had recently been appointed Chair at 'Community First in Herefordshire and Worcestershire'.

There were no other new Declarations of Interest.

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

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

There were no outstanding actions or matters arising from the last meeting.

5. The Future of Herefordshire Business Board

5.1 The Chair provided an overview of discussions held at a Steering Group meeting to discuss the future of Herefordshire Business Board.

5.2 He advised that the LEP Board had decided to fund ongoing administration support for the Herefordshire Business Board for the next five years.

5.3 The Chair advised that the Steering Group are recommending that the Herefordshire Business Board be funded in the future to become an inward investment partnership. SS added that this would be in full cooperation with Herefordshire Council officers and would aim to bring the voice of business to these initiatives.

5.4 RL advised that a decision had been taken at LEP Board to wind up the partnership with effect from the end of the financial year. However, she said that there would be various ongoing income streams due to the LEP, which in future would be collected by Shropshire County Council.

5.5 Board members asked for further detail on monies currently available to the LEP and for clarification as to what would happen to any future monies collected by Shropshire Council. RL provided some outline figures and advised that much was still to be determined. However, she advised that the LEP was trying to support as many appropriate initiatives as

possible before it is wound up. She stressed that although the LEP functions were being transferred to Shropshire Council from April 2024, its assets, including finance, were not.

- 5.6 GW asked for clarification as to when LEP Directorships would end. The Chair advised that this decision would be made by the Directors at the appropriate time.
- 5.7 Board members agreed unanimously with the Steering Group's recommendation (point 5.3 above). The Chair will now develop a paper for consideration by the Board before submission to the LEP.
- 5.8 SS asked for clarification as to what would happen to the membership of the Herefordshire Business Board if its proposal to focus on Inward Investment was accepted by the LEP. The Chair advised that the Terms of Reference and membership would both need to be revised to reflect its new focus and would be covered in the paper (5.7 above).
- 6. **Stronger Towns Fund**
- 6.1 AA had sent her apologies for today's meeting, therefore the Chair provided a brief update.
- 6.1.2 Some projects have been delivered and are operational: Cycle Track, Electric Buses, Meadow Arts. The Skate Park project is near to completion.
- 6.1.3 Good progress is being made with the Wyeseide, Castle Green and Digital Skills Centre projects.
- 6.1.4 A proposal to move the Library/Resource Centre project from Maylord Orchards to the Shire Hall has been discussed extensively at Stronger Towns Board and Project Delivery Group (PDG). A final decision on investment in the project is expected at Herefordshire Council's budget setting cabinet meeting shortly.
- 6.1.5 There are some ongoing issues with the museum project, specifically with regard to sourcing a suitable contractor.
- 6.1.6 There are some issues to do with cost overruns at the Southside project.
- 6.1.7 Purchase of Packer's House, Hereford, was completed in November. This will be the location for the Digital Culture Hub and NM (the Project lead) advised that focus will now be on activity timeframes and budget.

FM

6.1.8 The Powerhouse Theatre project will be housed in Packer's House. Following the purchase of the premises, plans can now progress.

6.4 CD added that if all projects progress to plan, they will deliver £26 million in matched funding to the city.

6.5 SS queried how #StrongerHereford news was marketed. The Chair advised that a comms plan is in place. CD advised that discussions regarding #StrongerHereford's legacy are ongoing.

7. Horizon Scan

7.1 **Marches Forward Partnership:** NK advised that all four councils (Powys, Monmouthshire, Shropshire and Herefordshire) had now signed a Memorandum of Understanding. Working groups have been set up and are meeting monthly to explore opportunities for working together.

7.2 Shared Prosperity/Rural Prosperity Funds (SPF/RPF)

7.2.1 NK advised that Year 3 funding can now be accessed for these funds. Details of opportunities will be published via a portal, the details of which will be shared with JB for circulation to the Board. (Post meeting note: the portal is accessible here: <https://www.supplyingthesouthwest.org.uk/>). Grant opportunities can be accessed via the UKSPF page.

NK

7.2.2 Board members commented on the short timeframes allowed for bids to be received for previous funding opportunities. NK said she would feed this back to officers but commented that by opening year 3 funding opportunities now, longer timeframes should be possible.

7.2.3 NK advised Board members of the [Council's webpage](#) where further information on the SPF can be found.

7.3 The Chair asked for early notification from NK/RA on any future funding opportunities. This will enable interested parties to prepare projects in advance of opportunities becoming 'live'.

7.4 Economy and Place Board

7.4.1 HB asked for an update on the Economy and Place Board. NK advised that a new Head of Economy and Regeneration

had recently been appointed (David Wright). He was keen to meet with businesses and further progress would be made in the new year.

7.5 In response to a query regarding the senior management structure at Herefordshire Council, NK referred members to the [Council's website](#).

8. Marches LEP

8.1 In addition to the update provided in Section 5 above, RL advised that budget is available for a promotional campaign to raise awareness of the Marches Growth Hub. She asked Board members for their ideas on how this could be spent.

8.2 Board members' ideas focused primarily on utilising existing networks and their databases to disseminate information on the Hub. RL will provide suitable materials, including case studies, that Board members can share with their networks, as appropriate.

RL

8.3 SS suggested targeted engagement with businesses, particularly via telephone contact and face-to-face meetings would be more beneficial. However, she accepted that this would not be achievable within the budget indicated by RL.

8.4 NK referred to a graduate trainee at Herefordshire Council who is developing a schedule of business events. She will link RL with the trainee so that information can be shared.

NK

9. NMITE

9.1 JN reported that NMITE is progressing well with over 100 students now attending and strong recruitment for the next academic year.

9.2 JN advised members of a new bursary opportunity available to local people, funded by local business. DW asked for further information to be shared with him so that he could pass it on to potential applicants at the college.

DW

10. Sector Updates

Please see Appendix 1 below.

11. Any Other Business

11.1 HB shared some thoughts on sustainable business practice and how to support and encourage this through Herefordshire

Business Board. This includes how it is incorporated as part of the future focus on inward investment. Herefordshire Business Board meetings will have 'Sustainable business' as a standing item on future agenda.

FM/JB

12. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 29 January, 4.00 – 6.00 pm venue to be confirmed.

All 2024 Dates:

Monday 25 March

Monday 3 June

Monday 22 July

Monday 30 September

Monday 2 December

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Appendix 1 – Sector Updates

Manufacturing

No update – SE/JR not present

Energy - GW

1. Referenced Government announcements in recent autumn statement: Organisations selling boilers minimum requirement that 3% are heat pumps; freeing of grid capacity.
2. Referenced COP28 conference and ambitions to increase solar energy. Solar Energy Task Force meeting in Westminster tomorrow (5 December). GW attending.

Creative - NM

1. Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) Cultural Strands: Research into creative businesses has been commissioned (5th Sector Consultancy). Three month contract. Will help to inform the review and update of the county's Cultural Strategy.
2. Tender for one to one business support and training for creative businesses – expected to commence after Christmas.
3. Public Arts Strategy Consultation progressing. NM to send link to further information to JB for circulation to Board.
4. Herefordshire Cultural Partnerships – currently employing one day/week admin. Would be good to see that underpinned – possibly meet with LEP objectives for economic regeneration?
5. Camelot contract ending (National Lottery) – new contractors promising a doubling of investment in good causes.

Education – DW (AA not present)

1. Government announcement in autumn statement regarding transformation of Level 3 qualifications is causing concern amongst educators.
2. Student numbers at college have increased this year, but student behaviour has deteriorated. Possibly result of local providers such as Nova Training and Horizon having ceased trading locally.
3. Signed to be part of Black Country and Marches Institute of Technology. This dovetails well with plans for Level 4/5 qualifications. In discussion with JN, particularly around carbon training centre (due for completion March 2024).
4. On behalf of AA, DW mentioned Hereford College of Arts recent Ofsted result – Outstanding. Congratulations to all involved.
5. Interested in developing 'Safer students' initiative.

Tourism – CD

1. Observations on lack of promotion of Hereford City as a tourist destination when compared with similar cities, eg Chester. Stronger Towns Funding has helped this, but still requires further investment.