

**MINUTES OF THE SHROPSHIRE BUSINESS BOARD MEETING HELD ON  
MONDAY 14 JANUARY 2013 4.30 PM - 6.40 PM  
AT SHIREHALL**

**Present:**

**Businesses**

|                     |                              |
|---------------------|------------------------------|
| Nick Chavasse       | NRG Direct Mail Ltd          |
| Karen Davies        | Heart of England Fine Foods  |
| Duncan Gray         | Muller Dairy (UK) LTD        |
| Tudor Griffiths     | Tudor Griffiths Group Ltd    |
| Mandy Stoker        | Chair METNET, E4 Environment |
| Mandy Thorn (Chair) | Marches Care Ltd             |

**Representatives**

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| Fay Easton           | Shropshire Enterprise Partnership                 |
| Gareth Evans         | Handelsbanken – Banking Representative            |
| Katie Foster         | Chair Shropshire & Telford Tourism Strategy Board |
| Ann Johnson          | Federation of Small Businesses                    |
| Glynn Jones          | Bank of England                                   |
| Councillor Mike Owen | Portfolio Holder Economic Growth & Prosperity     |
| Steve Wain           | Shropshire Learning Network                       |

**Officers**

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| Andy Evans     | Group Manager, Business Growth and Prosperity |
| Mark Pembleton | Service Manager for Business and Enterprise   |
| Julie Macrae   | Business Engagement Officer                   |

**In Attendance**

|                   |                                 |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| Steve Orton       | Department of Work and Pensions |
| Susan Coleman     | Business Support Officer        |
| Claire Cox        | Investment Officer – Flax Mill  |
| Elizabeth Perkins | Project Manager – Flax Mill     |
| Clive Wright      | Operations Director             |
| Amanda Holyoak    | Committee Officer               |

**1. Welcome, Apologies and Introductions**

The Chair welcomed Members and wished all a happy and prosperous new year. Apologies were received from Will Morris, James Thompson, Arthur Hill, and Tony Bywater.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest. The Chair said she would be talking about interests later in the meeting.

**3. Minutes**

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2012 were confirmed as a correct record.
- 3.2 The Portfolio Holder reported that the Leader of the Council would be attending the Business Ambassadors reception following the meeting and

would provide an update on IP&E.

#### **4. Flax Mill Maltings Regeneration Scheme Update**

4.1 Elizabeth Perkins, Project Manager, and Claire Cox, Investment Officer were welcomed to the meeting. They presented achievements to date and future plans in relation to commercial opportunities and the Flaxmill to emphasise that this was a very exciting time to get involved.

4.2 Claire Cox explained her role in identifying and generating commercial interest in the site. The unique selling point was the opportunity to become a tenant in the world's first iron framed building, the predecessor of the modern sky scraper. Full planning approval had been achieved and recent demolitions had made bold statements about progress.

4.3 They summarised the opportunity available with approximately 600m<sup>2</sup> of internal space per floor, state of the art infrastructure and services and provision of innovative environmentally conscious and technically advanced buildings, conference facilities and car parking provision.

4.4 It was intended that some creative 'hot space' would be made available, for example, for use by photographers or artists. The site would offer much more than office accommodation, with a mixture of commercial and public space with those locating there immediately becoming part of a community.

4.5 They outlined each phase of the project, Phase 1 being refurbishment, landscaping and provision of temporary car parking. Phase 2 would involve further infrastructure improvements. The whole master plan vision involved £50 million of investment over a 6 acre site with office, commercial, residential space, retail and restaurants and possibly a hotel.

4.6 They outlined how members of the Business Board could help:

- By becoming advocates of the project
- Suggesting companies that might be interested in the commercial opportunities available
- Broker access to funding
- Complete the feedback form requesting thoughts on the scheme
- Take the survey to help shape the use of space available in Phase 1
- Keeping in touch with the commercial opportunity

They were happy to make the presentation in any setting and tours could also be arranged.

4.7 Fay Easton commented on the fantastic development and asked about the involvement of Urban Splash. It was confirmed that Urban Splash were not currently involved in the project but conversations were ongoing.

4.8 In response to questions, Claire and Elizabeth acknowledged that rents would need to be set at commercial Shrewsbury rates, possibly with a small premium. Fine tuning was needed to take into account maintenance costs and whether these would be included in the rent or made as an additional service charge.

4.9 Fay also emphasised the importance of parking availability which was an extremely important factor. This was to be reviewed with a view to expanding the amount of parking space available.

4.10 Katie Foster referred back to a time when the building was known as the 'world's first skyscraper' and felt this was an effective way to attract attention, although possibly less sophisticated. When it came to developing conference facilities she highlighted the need for contact with the Shropshire and Telford Conference Desk.

4.11 Ann Johnson referred to discussions at the Creative Forum and emphasised the significant interest in availability of flexible space for use by creative businesses and other micro businesses.

4.12 Nick Chavasse agreed to find out where the Flaxmill stood in the Broadband roll out project.

**Nick  
Chavasse**

4.13 It was agreed that the presentation made be circulated to all members of the Board. The Chair thanked Elizabeth and Claire for attending and drawing attention to the extremely exciting project.

**Julie  
Macrae**

## **5. Operations Director, Shropshire Council**

5.1 Clive Wright, Operations Director, Shropshire Council was welcomed and introduced to the Board. He reported that he had already met with the Chair and had discussed the Business Board's priorities. He went on to explain what his role entailed and made a brief presentation on the new structure of the Council and future direction.

5.2 Significant changes were underway to allow the Council to work in a new way. His presentation explained that these were driven by the need to save £70 million from the Council's discretionary budget of £200 million between 2014 – 2017. £50 million of this was already committed on contracts, and further efficiency savings could simply not address this reduction.

5.3 The purpose of the Council 2012 – 2014 had been identified as:

- Keeping children safe
- Looking after vulnerable people
- High quality education
- Economic growth

5.4 The future would involve commissioning outcomes based on demand and close working with Elected Members. He used the analogy of car manufacturing to illustrate how the way ahead would be solution focused, bottom up, make better use of intelligence and communication and value for money.

5.5 The set up of IP&E would allow selling of services to other authorities eg back office functions, and this would sustain jobs. By June 2013, it was intended that Church Stretton would be the first market town to be

commissioning ready, shared services would be commissioning ready and Shire Services would be in profit and creating jobs.

5.6 He asked the Board for its help emphasising that he remained flexible and welcomed comments or criticism at any time.

5.7 Nick Chavasse commented on the current opportunity for a big win for the Council in relation to communication. He referred to the proposed contract for broadband roll out, which if awarded, meant that Shropshire would be subject to what the supplier wished to do, rather than what was needed. His concern was that areas with a significant number of businesses and needing broadband the most were not prioritised in the first phase of the project.

5.8 He thought that the Council should not accept constraints imposed by BDUK and the supplier and felt that these needed to be challenged.

5.9 Clive was thanked for his presentation.

## **6. Universal Jobmatch**

6.1 Steve Orton, Department of Work and Pensions, explained that all of Shropshire's Recruitment Consultants were now based in Shrewsbury, dealing exclusively with employers and between 1,000 and 2,500 vacancies a month.

6.2 The Jobmatch system introduced in November 2012, would allow easy connection between employers and potential employees and involved on-line job posting and matching. It replaced all previous DWP vacancy services, allowed testing of the market, was free, easy to use and automatically matched CVs with vacancies.

6.3 Ann Johnson referred to an event arranged for April focusing on individuals in marginalised Groups wishing to set up businesses or seek self employment. Steve Alton agreed to find someone to attend to provide advice in relation to implications for those receiving benefits.

**Steve Orton**

6.4 Fay Easton also commented that seeking advice regarding self employment and benefits had proved challenging and that there did not seem to be a generic policy. Steve agreed to work with her to provide standard information.

**Steve Orton**

6.5 Steve was thanked for attending the meeting.

## **7. Governance of Business Board**

7.1 Mark Pembleton reported that the term of office for Business Board Chair and Vice-Chair was two years. Nominations would therefore be required before the April meeting. The Chair and Vice Chair were required to be one of the business representatives on the Board. Mandy Thorn and Arthur Hill had indicated that they would be happy to continue if they had the full support of the Board to do so. Nominations were requested by the end of March, to be sent to Mark Pembleton.

**All Board Members**

- 7.2 Reference was made to the Nolan Principles appended to the Terms of Reference and the need to adhere to these. The Chair suggested that a publicised register of interests of Board Members be maintained and it was also suggested that 'declarations of interest' be a regular agenda item.
- 7.3 The Board discussed this proposal extensively, some members warning against more bureaucracy, particularly as the Board only had an advisory role. The Chair emphasised that there were no current concerns but the Board's influence was likely to grow in future. A register of interests would maximise transparency and protect members against any perception of gain through their membership. It was also noted that Telford and Wrekin's Business Board maintained such a register.
- 7.4 Some members of the Board had served in excess of a four year term but it was agreed that it would be foolish to lose experienced members, as had happened previously, for this reason alone. The Chair encouraged more suggestions for new members, particularly those from the creative industries or commercial developers.
- 7.5 Board Members also thanked Mandy for the sterling job she had undertaken to date as Chair of the Board and the significant amount of time she had invested in this role.
- 7.6 Mark Pembleton agreed to update and revise the terms of reference to reflect the Board's new role and the inclusion of a register of interests.

## **8 Marches LEP – Latest Developments**

- 8.1 The overarching strategy of the LEP had been circulated to members before Christmas. Several members expressed concern about the quality of the document and the Chair acknowledged that there was no measureable content to it. She reminded members that to date the LEP had not had any core funding and was reliant on the economic development teams of the three authorities. The LEP Chair was also standing down and it would be essential to recruit someone with high standing in the private sector and establish its own secretariat.
- 8.2 The three Business Board Chairs were very frustrated about the lack of delivery to date. Clive Wright emphasised the importance of being clear about what the private sector wanted should the funding become available.

## **9. Shropshire Economic Growth Strategy - Action Plan – Updates**

- 9.1 As time was tight, the Chair asked for brief updates from Champions present and it was agreed to share action plans electronically.
- 9.2 Steve Wain and Duncan Gray reported on Higher Education and Apprenticeship developments and on their ideas to date. It appeared that employers could be reluctant to take on an apprentice, not because they could not afford to pay them, but because of the complications involved in employing them.

- 9.3 An idea was for the College to act as the employer and provide portfolio or taster apprenticeship placements, before an employer and employee chose to commit.
- 9.4 In addition to provision of technical skills, the College could also address character skills in preparation for employment, for example, dealing with attitude and punctuality. Duncan reported that Steve would be visiting Muller shortly to discuss their work with apprentices.
- 9.5 In terms of Higher Education, the Board was pleased to note that two university partners were showing a strong willingness to work on taking forward the Growth Strategy priority on Higher Education in Shropshire.
- 9.6 Mandy Stoker enquired about the relationship between Champions and Council officers and it was emphasised Champions would provide advice, guidance and direction, with officers fitting in with their availability and being guided by their experience.
- 9.7 Katie Foster circulated the Visitor Economy Sector Action plan and explained that some actions and milestones listed had been achieved already but had been included to provide a context for future action. She emphasised it was a working document which would change.
- 9.8 Karen Davis circulated a hard copy of her action plan and emphasised the importance of cohesion and synergy between champions.
- 9.9 Susan Coleman, Business Support Officer, reported that 'Project North' as presented at the last meeting was now underway and invited any feedback or identification of potential links with action plans.

The meeting concluded at 6.40 pm.