

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
SHROPSHIRE BUSINESS BOARD**

**HELD ON
MONDAY 16th JANUARY 2017
4.30 pm – 6.30 pm**

Present:

Mandy Thorn MBE (Chair)	Marches Care Ltd, Shrewsbury
Paul Bennett (Vice Chair)	Shropshire Business Partnership
Lindsay Barton	Golden Kite Solutions Ltd
Catherine Baxter	Harper Adams University (Agri-technology sector rep)
William Morris	Utilities Representative – Managing Director of SSE Retail
Richard Sheehan	Shropshire Chamber of Commerce
Arthur Hill	CH Hill & Sons, Much Wenlock
Gill Hamer	Director Marches LEP
Paul Kirkbright	University Centre Shrewsbury
Matthew Snelson	Grainger & Worrall Ltd
Chris Woolley	Department for Work and Pensions
Tony Bywater	Salop Leisure
Tim Downes	JR & MC Downes & Son
Mandy Stoker	E4 Environment
Catherine Armstrong	Representing Shrewsbury Colleges Group
Richard Lumby	Carillion PLC
Cllr Nic Laurens	Shropshire Council
Kully Chahal	Department for Work and Pensions
Cllr Steve Davenport	Chair of Shropshire Councils Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny committee

Shropshire Council Officers

George Candler	Director of Place and Enterprise
Andrew Stirling	Regeneration Manager
Gemma Davies	Head of Economic Growth
Lisa Ashby	Economic Growth Coordinator
Adrian Cooper	Planning Policy and Strategy Manager
Eddie West	Principal Planning Policy Officer

In Attendance

Christian Dangerfield	Midlands Engine Investment Fund
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1 Welcome, Apologies and Introductions

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and introduced Christian Dangerfield who would be presenting on the Midlands Engine Investment Fund. The Chair also welcomed Catherine Armstrong, Vice Principal of Shrewsbury College who would be representing Lyn Surgeon, Interim Principal of Shrewsbury College. The Chair also welcome Chris Woolley who would be attending future meetings as a representative of DWP in place of Kully Chahal. The Chair also introduced Gemma Davies, as the newly appointed Head of Economic Growth to the Board and also welcomed Shropshire Council Officers, Adrian Cooper and Eddie West who would be updating the Board on the Local Plan review.
- 1.2 The Chair notified the Board that Shaun Carvill had sadly tendered his resignation from the board. The Chair, on behalf of the Board thanked Shaun for all his hard work and commitment to the Board and that he would be missed.
- 1.3 Apologies for absence were received from Lyn Surgeon [Shrewsbury Colleges Group], John Pitchford [Barclays Bank], Simon MacVickar [Shropshire Chamber/Bridgnorth Aluminium], Matt Bulley [Caterpillar Shrewsbury], Tudor Griffiths [Tudor Griffiths Group Ltd] and Steve Charmley [Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Shropshire Council]

2 Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 The Chair reminded members of the importance of declaring any interest at the beginning of the meeting. One declaration of interest was received from Will Morris in respect of any discussions on utilities.

3 Minutes and Matters Arising

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting on the 21st November 2016 were checked for accuracy. No matters arising were recorded and the minutes of the meeting were confirmed as a correct record and that actions had been followed up.
- 3.2 Gill Hamer gave a brief Marches LEP update to the Board and referred to the November meeting where there had been a discussion on utilities. Gill confirmed that discussions were happening and that the issues had been raised with Western Power. There was a discussion around the table on utilities and utility infrastructure, in particular to electricity and gas supply with many areas around the county experiencing issues which could inhibit productivity and could hold back investment.
- 3.3 Gill also gave an update on the industrial strategy consultation being launched on the 23rd January. The Industrial Strategy sets out a plan to improve living standards and economic growth by increasing productivity and driving growth across the whole country. The Chair

confirmed that the Board could feed into the consultation once open.

- 3.4 The Chair gave an update on the recruitment to the Board, confirming that there had been a good response to the recruitment campaign to date. Social media channels such as LinkedIn were proving an effective method and generating lots of interest. The Chair requested help from the Board in using social media to help promote the recruitment campaign as this was proving an effective channel.
- 3.5 The progress of the IPPR visioning work was raised by Matthew Snelson. George Candler responded to say that the first version submitted had not been satisfactory. A second version had been submitted which had been sent to a select number of contributors for their views. George confirmed that the feedback from this sense check has now been fed back to Ed Cox with the final draft due by the end of January. This will be a paper which articulates the priorities and will be followed up by a larger report. The Chair asked if the intention was still to have a presentation on the report. George confirmed that the intention is still to have a presentation however no dates have been put in the diary as yet.
- 3.6 George Candler's response on the visioning work replaced Andrew's update as Agenda item 5

All

4 Local Plan Update

- 4.1 Adrian Cooper and Eddie West gave a presentation on the Local Plan Update. The update is a partial review of the current plan 2006 – 2026 which, once reviewed, will extend it to 2036 and is taking place due to changes in national policy. Adrian outlined in his presentation what the partial review would cover.
- 4.2 The existing local plan housing requirement outlines that 27500 houses will be required in Shropshire between 2006 and 2026. There is already a supply of 15,400 approved for development. The review will consider the level of additional housing needed. Adrian outlined three options of additional dwellings up to 2036, whilst also considering the distribution and economic impact.
- 4.3 There was detailed discussion around the table on the sustainability of the plans, particularly opportunities for rural areas and the need to ensure that that rural communities still remain sustainable with a range of facilities and mixed housing provision. It was also discussed that enough low cost housing should be available to encourage younger people to stay and work locally. How the plan would link to neighbourhood plans was raised, together with the importance of the county's infrastructure and how this affects development.
- 4.4 In addition to the local plan consultation Adrian added that the consultation would be accompanied by a call for sites, an invitation to submit potential development sites for consideration within the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA). Adrian and Eddie pointed to the

importance of this so that Shropshire could accurately identify its land supply.

5 Midlands Engine Investment Fund

5.1 Christian Dangerfield gave an informative presentation on the Midlands Engine Investment Fund which is a £250 million pound fund aimed at boosting the economy of the Midlands and explained to the Board that it is a joint agreement between the British Business Bank and ten Local Enterprise Partnerships.

5.2 The key features of the MEIF were outlined and discussion was had around the table on how businesses could access and benefit from the funds. Christian clarified that once the fund managers were in post in March they would be talking to intermediaries.

5.3 The chair thanked Christian on the update of the fund prior to its launch looked forward to more information as the launch of the fund progresses.

6 Advanced Manufacturing Skills Hub

6.1 Matthew Snelson gave an update to the Board on the development of the Marches Centre for Manufacturing and Technology. He gave the background to its development and the offer. Matthew also added that the project was in need of investment and highlighted opportunities for businesses to sponsor 'zones' within the development. The use of PR to gain the sponsorship required was discussed with suggestions made around the table.

6.2 Tony Bywater, congratulated Matthew and the other partners on what they had achieved and what it has brought to the industry. This was echoed around the table. The Chair added that the initiative was conceived through the Business Board as a private sector led project with funding through the Marches LEP skills fund.

7 Round Table Update from Business Board Members

7.1 Tim Downes – Agriculture JR & MC Downes & Son
Gave an overview of the agricultural industry and whilst there has been a downturn in the dairy industry, a mild winter has meant higher yields, with livestock also doing well, particularly beef and lamb. Tim also noted that there had been more consolidation within farming with larger farms being more successful.

- 7.2 Kully Chahal - DWP
Kully from DWP informed the Board that there is now a schools advisor in place to cover Shropshire which will ensure a closer relationship between schools and businesses. Kully also updated the Board on the progress of the Universal credit rollout and also that the Positive for disabilities endorsement was changing to Disabilities Confident. Lisa Ashby to circulate the information on how to sign up to Disabilities Confident to the Board.
- 7.3 Lindsay Barton – FSB
Lindsay reported an increase in business confidence following Brexit, with levels back to what they were 12 months ago, although Brexit still causing some issues, particularly for small businesses. Access to funding for businesses is still proving to be an issue. Lindsay also spoke about the Young Enterprise Awards 2017. Lindsay confirmed that Information had been circulated prior to the meeting on the awards.
- 7.4 William Morris –Utilities Representative Managing Director of SSE Retail
Brexit still causing issues in the utility market, with particular pressures in the wholesale energy markets. Will urged businesses to check their accounts to make sure they are on the right energy deal as prices could rise in a few months' time.
- 7.5 Richard Lumby –Defence and Construction - Carillion PLC
Richard pointed to big swings in commodity prices and the quantity of supply variable in the construction industry which is affecting the whole of the supply chain.
- 7.6 Mandy Thorn – Care sector – Marches Care Ltd
Biggest issue at the moment within the care sector is the availability of labour and pointed to this causing real concern within the sector.
- 7.7 Paul Bennett – Shropshire Business Partnership – Aaron and Partners
Paul reported that redundancies are being seen in businesses employing less than 20 people. Attracting and retaining higher skilled managers is also an issue at the moment. Paul added that external companies are investing with many buying British businesses, particularly from America.
- 7.8 Arthur Hill – CH Hill & Sons
Arthur Hill pointed to commodity values and also a spike in energy prices being specific issues.
- 7.9 Richard Sheehan – Shropshire Chamber of Commerce
Reported that the latest Quarterly Economic Survey shows positive statistics for the county. Richard also explained to the Board that they had expanded their schools engagement programme and also that their manufacturing partnership was growing. Richard also reminded the Board about the Business Awards 2017.
- 7.10 Catherine Armstrong – Shrewsbury Colleges Group

Gave an update on Shrewsbury Colleges and the work that was being on Apprenticeship standards and the advice they can offer to employers. If any Board members had any questions on this they would be very welcome to contact Catherine Armstrong. Catherine also spoke about the Colleges facilities and offered the Board use of the various function rooms. The Chair thanked Catherine for this kind offer and said that it would certainly be a very valuable resource to use.

- 7.11 Catherine Baxter – Harper Adams
Pointed to a change in applicant behaviour that all universities were having to adapt too. A new role is also being created around apprenticeships and working with employers. Catherine also spoke about the outreach programme and continued engagement with employers.
- 7.12 Matthew Snelson - Grainger and Worrall Ltd
Reported good employment figures. Lots of developments within the business including the castings facility in Worcester together with the opening of their new state of the art machining facility at the Bridgnorth site, having now moved the existing facility from Telford.
- 7.13 Mandy Stoker – E4environment Ltd
Mandy gave an overview of the Environment sector and reported a similar picture in that that not many grants for businesses were available. Mandy also spoke about the work being done on funding for an environmental service research centre.
- 7.14 Tony Bywater – Salop Leisure Ltd
Reported a successful year for tourism in the UK and gave an update on their development of a 36 acre caravan and glamping park which will also offer a spa and will be a great opportunity to increase tourism in the area.
- 7.15 The Chair thanked the members for their informative updates.

8 AOB

- 8.1 Andrew Stirling informed the Board that this would be his last meeting as he would be moving from Shropshire Council to take up another role. Andrew thanked the Board and on behalf of the Board the Chair thanked and wished Andrew all the very best for the future.

9 Next Meeting Dates 2017

Monday 16 th January 2017	Shirehall, Shrewsbury
Monday 13 th March 2017	Shirehall, Shrewsbury
Monday 22 nd May 2017	Shirehall, Shrewsbury
Monday 10 th July 2017	Harper Adams
Monday 18 th September 2017	Shirehall, Shrewsbury
Monday 27 th November 2017	Shirehall, Shrewsbury

