

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

**HELD ON**

**TUESDAY 7<sup>th</sup> October 2014 4.30pm – 6.35 pm**

**AT THE GUILD HALL, SHREWSBURY**

**Present:**

**Board Members**

Mandy Thorn MBE (Chair)	Marches Care Ltd
Nick Chavasse MBE	NRG Direct Mail Ltd
Duncan Gray	Muller Dairy (UK) Ltd, Market Drayton
Tudor Griffiths	Tudor Griffiths Group Ltd, Ellesmere
Arthur Hill (Vice Chair)	CH Hill and Sons (Vice Chair Shropshire Business Board)
Matthew Snelson	Grainger & Worrall, Bridgnorth
Mandy Stoker	E 4 Environment & Chair of METnet.

**Representatives**

Cllr Steve Charmley	Portfolio Holder Business Growth, Shropshire Council
Dr Catherine Baxter	Harper Adams University
Paul Bennett	Shropshire Business Partnership
Kairen Francis	Jobcentre Plus
Chris Hyde	Handlesbanken
Rob Hudson	Handlesbanken – High Street Bank Representative
Ann Johnson	Federation of Small Business
Richard Sheehan	Shropshire Chamber of Commerce & Enterprise Ltd
Steve Wain	Shropshire Learning Network

**Shropshire Council Officers**

Clare Charlesworth-Jones	Manager Financial Advice – Forward Plan
Andy Evans	Group Manager, Business Growth and Prosperity
Helen Gillmore	Business Support Assistant, Business and Enterprise Team
Mark Pembleton	Service Manager for Business and Enterprise
Caroline Reid-Smith	Team Leader, Business and Enterprise Support
Julie Fildes	Committee Officer

**In Attendance – Presentations to the Board**

Paul Kirkbright	University of Chester
Kirstin Henley	BID Shrewsbury Manager
Mike Matthews	BIDS Shrewsbury Chair

## **1 Welcome, Apologies, Introductions and Announcements**

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. Particular welcomes were extended to Matthew Snelson and Paul Bennett as new Board Members.
- 1.2 Apologies were received from, Shaun Carvill of Clickingmad Ltd, Councillor Steve Davenport, Chair of the Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny Committee, Matt Bulley of Caterpillar Ltd, Tony Bywater MBE, Salop Leisure Ltd, Will Morris, Utilities Representative , Fay Easton of Shropshire Enterprise Partnership and Clive Wright, Chief Executive of Shropshire Council.
- 1.3 Apologies for late arrival were received from Nick Chavasse MBE of NRG Direct Mail Ltd.
- 1.4 The Chairman announced that due to time pressures the Agenda would be re-ordered to allow for Agenda Item 7; University Centre Shrewsbury Update, to be considered earlier and consideration of the Minutes of the previous meeting taken at an appropriate point later in the meeting. This was agreed.

## **2 Declarations of Interest**

- 2.1 Members were reminded to declare any interests either at this point or if they became apparent during the meeting.
- 2.2 Dr Catherine Baxter of Harper Adams University and Agri-technology Sector Representative, Steve Wain of the Shropshire Learning Network and Mandy Thorn of Marches Care Ltd declared potential interests in agenda item 7, University Centre Shrewsbury Update.

## **3 Marches LEP Update and Board Feedback**

- 3.1 Mark Pembleton introduced the Confidential Marches LEP Update and Feedback from the Marches LEP Board Meeting on the 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2014.
- 3.2 Board Members supported the report recommendations that the top two priority schemes for Growth Deal 2 should be broadband, the superfast extension project and funding towards the University Centre Shrewsbury.
- 3.3 A Board Member enquired about the projects which had failed to receive LEP funding under Growth Deal 1. MP confirmed that these projects had not been shelved, some were pipeline projects and would be funded and others brought forward when new funds were available.

## **4 University Centre Shrewsbury Update Report**

- 4.1 Paul Kirkbright and Andy Evans gave a presentation to the Board on 'A New University for Shropshire', copy attached to signed minutes.
- 4.2 PK explained that the establishment of the University Centre would take place in two phases. The first would be the initial footprint being established in the town centre with:

- the Guildhall providing teaching and laboratory accommodation;
- library facilities based in 1a Castlegate;
- the ground floor of Rowley's House would be the administrative support centre and the consultation location;
- student living accommodation would be located within the town.

He confirmed that there would be an applicants' day in March where students could obtain more information about the University Centre. The second phase of the project would support the expansion of the University Centre with a larger campus established.

- 4.3 He confirmed that it was a tight schedule to have all in place for the start of the academic year in 2015 but reassured the Board that it could be done. In answer to a Board Member's question, he explained that courses which were under subscribed would be withdrawn from the programme. This decision would be made in late November 2014 and students advised and offered alternative courses or directed to other establishments.
- 4.4 AE confirmed that the project had the full backing of Council with cross party support, and the Council had allocated funds and buildings to enable the project to proceed.
- 4.5 A Board Member queried why the Council had not sought other partners for this project and in doing so increased the level of available expertise and the available areas of study. Dr Baxter advised that the Harper Adams University had been approached by colleagues from Chester University with the view to collaborative working in Shrewsbury. A memorandum of understanding was being signed by the two universities. PK added that once the University Centre was established as an independent university it might be minded to look to other academic bodies to provide expertise beyond its established curriculum.
- 4.6 It was noted that students studying in Shrewsbury might also be seeking part time employment and this would provide local businesses with a high calibre flexible labour pool. It was agreed that the University Centre would support the students desire to work to assist with the funding of their studies, and teaching programmes would be designed with a degree of flexibility to accommodate both students' and employers' needs.
- 4.7 Business Board Members were asked to support the establishment of the university centre through advocacy, sponsorship, provision of expertise and by acting as a critical friend. The Board unanimously supported the University Centre Shrewsbury and agreed that it would make a significant difference to the economy of the town.
- 4.8 It was agreed that the slides would be made available to Board Members after the meeting.

## **5 Shrewsbury Business Improvement District**

- 5.1 Mike Matthews and Kirstin Henley gave a presentation on the establishment of the Shrewsbury Business Improvement District (BID).

This was comprised of businesses based in Shrewsbury Town Centre.

- 5.2 MM confirmed that following a democratic vote by businesses in the area to establish the Shrewsbury BID, a management company had been formed in April 2014. The Company had a Board of 15 directors and employed one full time member of staff. He added that any levy paying business was able to apply for a position on the board. He continued that the organisation was Private Sector led but had representatives from the Public Sector on its Board which demonstrated the close working relationship between the two sectors. The two public sector representative were from Shrewsbury Town Council and Shropshire Council.
- 5.3 It was noted that working together as an organised group gave local businesses a stronger voice in the local decision making process and the Company worked closely with the Local Authorities and other bodies who had influence in the area. The Shrewsbury BID also promoted the area to both local residents and tourists and had spent time building a recognisable brand for the area.
- 5.4 In response to a Board Members question, it was confirmed that the Company Board could direct expenditure received from business rates to develop the Town Centre.
- 5.5 It was noted that members contributed a levy of 1.5% of the rateable value of their businesses as a subscription fee for the organisation. These funds were used to support the company and finance projects in the locality.
- 5.6 Ann Johnson enquired about the promotion of Shrewsbury as a town which had good disabled access. MM replied that all demographics of the population were considered when promoting the town and they would consider how promotion materials could make more of this.
- 5.7 Matt Snelson enquired about overseas promotion of the town, which was particularly relevant due to the establishment of the University Centre and the promotion of it to potential overseas students. It was confirmed that the website was available to view in multiple languages and international promotion had been considered by the Company Board.

## **6 Business Rates**

- 6.1 Clare Charlesworth-Jones, Shropshire Council Head of Finance Business Partnerships and Deputy S151 Officer, introduced her report on Business rates and explained the new funding mechanism for local government in relation to the re-localisation of business rates.
- 6.2 In reply to a Board Members' query she confirmed that rate setting was beyond the Council's control and was set by Central Government. She continued that due to the way the scheme worked, Shropshire Council received more funds from Central Government than it remitted. Members of the Board commented that this should be publicised more widely as it was not commonly understood.
- 6.3 Board Members were advised that all financial information regarding

Council budgets and spending were available on the Shropshire Council internet and all financial reports were readily accessible on the site.

- 6.4 It was noted that all car parks had a rateable value and attracted a charge regardless of whether they generated income through fees or not. CCJ confirmed that the Council also paid business rates on its car parks as did out of town supermarkets.

## **7 Minutes and Matters Arising**

- 7.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2014 were confirmed as a correct record.

### *7.2 Item 6 Economic Growth Services Redesign*

Board Members requested that an update on this be provided at the next Business Board meeting scheduled for 9<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

### *7.3 Item 7 Mobile Telecoms*

Shropshire Council's Portfolio Holder for Business Growth updated the Board on progress with Broadband provision and mobile phone signal coverage.

Further information from the Business Board Mobile Phone Questionnaire would be provided to the next Board meeting.

## **8 Any Other Business**

### **8.1 COGS**

The Chair stated that the next major COGS event would be a Meet the Buyer opportunity, hosted jointly by Shropshire and Telford at Southgate on 4<sup>th</sup> December. Further details were available on the COGS website.

- 8.2 The Chairman announced that Ann Johnson would be standing down from the Business Board but she was delighted that she would remain as a Business Ambassador. The Chairman thanked Ann for the incredible contribution she had made to the work of the Business Board. She continued that it was important that Ann continued her Chairmanship of COGS.

## **9 Future Agenda Items**

- Economic Growth Services Redesign for December's meeting;
- 2 year review of progress with the Shropshire Economic Growth Strategy 2012, also for Decembers meeting: and
- Focus on rural issues for first meeting of the new year:

## **10 Dates of Next Meetings**

The next meeting of the Business Board would be held on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2014 at 4.30 pm at Upper Vaughan's, Shrewsbury Music Hall,

Shrewsbury.

Meetings for 2015 were as follows:

(All at 4.30pm to 6.30pm)

3 <sup>rd</sup> February 2015	Kingland Consulting;
21 <sup>st</sup> April 2015	Caterpillar, Shrewsbury;
14 <sup>th</sup> July 2015	Salop Leisure;
6 <sup>th</sup> October 2015	University Centre Shrewsbury; and
8 <sup>th</sup> December 2015	Shrewsbury Museum and Art Gallery.