

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

**HELD ON
MONDAY 12th SEPTEMBER 2016
4.00 pm – 6.30 pm**

UNIVERSITY CENTRE SHREWSBURY

Present:

Mandy Thorn MBE (Chair)	Marches Care Ltd, Shrewsbury
Lindsay Barton	Golden Kite Solutions Ltd
Catherine Baxter	Harper Adams University (Agri-technology sector rep)
Tudor Griffiths	Tudor Griffiths Group Ltd
William Morris	Utilities Representative – Managing Director of SSE Retail
Simon MacVicker	Shropshire Chamber of Commerce
Paul Bennet (Vice Chair)	Shropshire Business Partnership
Arthur Hill	CH Hill & Sons, Much Wenlock
Gill Hamer	Director Marches LEP
Paul Kirkbright	University Centre Shrewsbury
Matthew Snelson	Grainger & Worrall Ltd (Vice Chair)
Matt Bully	Caterpillar
Tim Downes	JR & MC Downes & Son
Shaun Carvill	Clicking Mad Ltd

Shropshire Council Officers

George Candler	Director of Place and Enterprise
Andrew Stirling	Regeneration Manager
Lisa Ashby	Economic Growth Coordinator

59 Welcome, Apologies and Introductions

- 59.1 The Chair welcomed the Business Board to the meeting and thanked Tudor Griffiths for kindly hosting the meeting at TG Builders Merchants in Bridgnorth and for the informative tour prior to the meeting. Tudor welcomed the Board to the meeting.
- 59.2 Apologies for absence were received from Owen Gahan [Kerry Foods], Lyn Surgeon [Shrewsbury Colleges Group], Tony Bywater [Salop Leisure], Fay Easton [Shropshire Enterprise Partnership], Kully Chahal [DWP], John Pitchford [Barclays bank] Cllr Steve Davenport [Chair of Shropshire Councils Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny committee].

60 Declarations of Interest

- 60.1 No declarations of interest received.

61 Minutes and Matters Arising

- 61.1 No matters arising recorded and the minutes of the meeting held on the 11th July 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and that actions had been followed up. The Chair explained that minutes were not recorded for the IPPR North visioning workshop.

62 Update on the Preparation of an Economic Vision for Shropshire

- 62.1 Andrew Stirling confirmed that all five of the workshops had now taken place and that a report in draft format was expected imminently. Overall the workshops had been very successful with good feedback and a range of views expressed. Andrew confirmed that the draft would be reviewed and that a sense check on the report would be undertaken with a selection from those who attended the workshop and follow up telephone calls. Andrew hoped that by the 1st/2nd week in October the report would be ready for circulation and notified the board that a presentation evening was being planned for November where Ed Cox would give an overview of the findings and visioning work. Dates for this will be confirmed in due course. The Board confirmed that they were happy a sense check was being undertaken.

63 Marches LEP update

- 63.1 Gill Hamer gave an update on the Marches LEP and the various bids that have been submitted and those that are awaiting approval.
- 63.2 Gill confirmed that the Shropshire Visioning work is needed in order to inform the priorities for Shropshire.
- 63.3 Gill gave a very brief update on the final negotiations taking place in order to develop Advanced Manufacturing Hubs in the Marches, the first of which will be developed in Bridgnorth. Grainger and Worrall are one of the four partners within the consortium and Matt Snelson would cover the development of the hub in more detail later in the meeting.
- 63.4 Gill Hamer gave an update on the LEP's visit to London to lobby MP's at the MP Summit. Both Gill and the chair confirmed that this visit was more positive than the last time the LEP visited two years ago, although the MP's did give caution to relying on any additional funding being available for projects and not to rely on any additional funding post the November statement.
- 63.5 Gill Hamer gave an overview of all the projects developing in the Marches as part of the Growth Deal funding and confirmed that a full project list would be circulated to the board.
- 63.6 Gill also gave an update on the developing cross border partnerships post referendum, particularly in Wales and confirmed that there was the opportunity to develop new relationships.

GH

64 Round Table Update from Business Board Members

- 64.1 The chair asked each member to give an overview of general business conditions and any issues affecting business or the sector in general.
- 64.2 Matt Snelson – Grainger and Worrall - reported that general business conditions were busy and that Grainger and Worrall were currently in the process of moving their Telford machine shop to Stanmore. Matt confirmed that the company's employment figures were looking very good with 650 currently employed. Matt also highlighted the work Grainger and Worrall were doing in developing an advanced manufacturing hub in Bridgnorth which he would cover later in the meeting. The chair highlighted this is a real good news story Shropshire and that it provided a good publicity opportunity.
- 64.3 Matt Bulley – Caterpillar Reman - gave an overview of the work that Caterpillar are currently engaged with and pointed to growth within the sector and good employment figures. Matt confirmed that they had plenty of work in the pipeline including UK MOD.
- 64.4 Tudor Griffiths – Tudor Griffiths Group Ltd - reported that that the opening of the latest TG Builders Merchants in Bridgnorth had gone very well with the official launch planned for the end of September. Tudor reported that everything going well across the group and that they were starting to look at green energy projects within the group. Interestingly in terms of concrete and quarrying they had recently sold the highest volume of concrete as a company.
- 64.5 Simon MacVicker – Bridgnorth Aluminium/Shropshire Chamber - highlighted potential trade deal concerns over export with a noticeable cooling off since the referendum but reported a sustained growth for the business.
- 64.6 Arthur Hill – gave an update to the board and highlighted the uncertainty at the moment facing businesses post Brexit.
- 64.7 Paul Kirkbright – University Centre Shrewsbury - gave an update to the board on UCS and highlighted that the HE market us now very competitive with students able to effectively trade up through the clearing process, so entering clearing as an option.
- 64.8 William Morris – SSE Retail – gave an update from SSE and highlighted a potential opportunity for Shropshire through the SMART metering programme as by 2020 each household in the UK will need a smart meter. Approximately 2,000 fitters need to be recruited and trained to undertake the metering programme and this could potentially be a LEP opportunity. William also highlighted a potential opportunity through the University with Environmental Science apprenticeships. William Morris to consult with Paul Kirkbright and Gill Hamer on potential opportunities.
- 64.9 Shaun Carvill – Clicking Mad Ltd – Reported that the creative sector had

WM

taken a big hit following the referendum decision with many companies putting projects on hold, however the sector had picked up. Shaun highlighted the issues of cyber-crime for businesses and the need to raise awareness within the Marches and protect business information.

- 64.10 Tim Downes - JR & MC Downes & Son- gave a useful overview of the farming sector and reported that there was a glimmer of recovery in the dairy business due to American company investment in UK dairy. Tim reported that while the dairy industry was showing signs of recovery lamb was still struggling. Tim also reported that organic farming was showing year on year growth, boosted by trade with America.
- 64.11 Lyndsay Barton - Federation of Small Businesses – Lyndsay gave an update on behalf of the FSB, citing that the overall picture was weaker since the referendum decision, due in part to delays in investment decisions. The Chair also agreed that while the picture for larger businesses was looking positive, the outlook at the moment for smaller SME businesses was still in the process of catching up.
- 64.13 Catherine Baxter – Harper Adams – gave a useful update on Harper Adams, including the new agri tech building and the agri EPI precision dairy project. Catherine also highlighted that the University had been awarded the accolade of top modern university of the year and advised the board to keep a watch on the Times as it would be published in their good university guide.
- 64.14 Paul Bennett – Aaron and Partners – confirmed that Aaron and Partners would be moving offices by the end of the October to new premises at Oxon. Paul echoed the general feeling from the board that the larger businesses were benefiting more from investment, particularly from the American Corporate market as they were looking at purchasing more companies. Paul highlighted that growth had been less significant for SME's with many putting their plans on hold following the referendum. Paul also highlighted the opportunities of cross border working and what benefits this could have for Shropshire businesses in certain sectors.
- 64.15 John Pitchford – Barclays Bank – John unfortunately couldn't make the meeting so emailed his update and the Chair read out the update on John's behalf. John cited that clearly, Brexit has been the main topic of debate for business at present and there was a mixed picture at this stage, albeit it being very early days and conflicting messages being seen every day. In general, Brexit took a lot of businesses by surprise with a large number not having a plan in place. There's been quite a lot of businesses 'catching up' since then. Exchange rates have been the main talking point so far with businesses reviewing their currency rate strategies. So far Barclays have seen little impact on investment decisions being deferred but it remains a concern and it is unclear about the strategy that foreign owned companies will employ, whilst they might not divest they may well switch future investment spend away from UK. Retailers are holding up reasonably well so far and are currently absorbing increased costs but it remains to be seen whether this will

continue. The Hospitality and Leisure sector is also fairing pretty well with the number of people holidaying in UK on the rise (staycations) and spend also increasing. This seems to be fuelled by Brexit as well as security concerns. Demand for overseas holidaymakers coming to the UK also seems to be faring well.

- 64.16 Mandy Thorn – Marches Care Ltd – Mandy gave an overview of the care sector highlighting issues with the labour supply. The chair thanked all the board for their updates.

65 Business Rate Consultation

- 65.1 A general discussion on the business rate consultation was had around the table with interesting points raised, particularly around what the top up would be, the appeals process and the engagement with the business community, however as this was a wide consultation with various stakeholders it was agreed that going forward smaller sub groups should be formed to feed into these consultations. The closing date of the 26th September was also felt to be too close to formulate a collective response but the chair asked if anyone had any specific items they wished to feed back then to send them to her.

All

66 Business Board Roles and Responsibilities

- 66.1 Due to time constraints this would be discussed at the next meeting, along with the formation of sub groups.

67 Ambassadors Network and Future Programme

- 67.1 Due to time constraints the future Ambassador programme would be discussed at the next meeting.

68 AOB

- 68.1 George Candler gave an overview of the Apprenticeship Levy and confirmed that Shropshire Council would be looking to see how the Apprenticeship Levy could be used creatively. The chair agreed that this was a good opportunity for the board to have an impact on how the levy could be redistributed. George confirmed that more information on the levy would be available in October and suggested that the levy should be looked at in more detail as a specific agenda item at the next Business Board meeting on the 21st November. The chair also noted that a sub group could be set up for this if a consultation response was required.

- 68.2 Matt Snelson gave an update to the board on the LEP funded £2.8m project which is part of the Growth Deal for capital skills project to develop a regional training centre as part of an Advanced Manufacturing Hub. Matthew explained that Grainger and Worrall are part of a consortium of companies which also includes Classic Motor Cars Ltd, Salop Design & Engineering and In-Comm Training developing the first hub in Bridgnorth as the Marches Institute of Manufacturing and Technology. Matthew also confirmed that they had been able to secure

the site in Bridgnorth with the training centre envisaged to open in 2017. The board agreed that this will be an excellent addition to Shropshire and will add value in terms developing the skill base within Shropshire.

69 Dates of Next Meetings

- 69.1 The next meeting of the Business Board to be held at 4.30pm on Monday 21st November 2016, at Shirehall, Shrewsbury