

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

**HELD ON
MONDAY 18TH DECEMBER 2017
4.30 pm – 6.30 pm**

Present:

Mandy Thorn MBE (Chair)	Marches Care Ltd, Shrewsbury
Paul Bennett (Vice Chair)	Shropshire Business Partnership
Catherine Baxter	Harper Adams University (Agri-technology sector rep)
Mandy Stoker	E4Environment
Arthur Hill	CH Hill & Sons, Much Wenlock
Gill Hamer	Director Marches LEP
Alison Wright	Starfish Advertising & Marketing Ltd
Simon MacVicker	Shropshire Chamber/Bridgnorth Aluminium
Gareth Niblett	DWP
Richard Sheehan	Shropshire Chamber of Commerce
Tony Bywater	Salop Leisure
John Pitchford	Barclays Bank, Local Banking Representative
Cllr Nic Laurens	Portfolio Holder for Enterprise and Growth

In Attendance

Kathryn Jones	Marches LEP
Claire Evans	Economic Growth, Shropshire Council
Shelley Robinson	Enterprise Coordinator, Shropshire Council

Shropshire Council Officers

George Candler	Director of Place and Enterprise
Gemma Davies	Head of Economic Growth
Lisa Ashby	Project & Sector Development Officer

43 Welcome, Apologies and Introductions

43.1 The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. As new members and attendees were present there was a round table introduction.

44 Declarations of Interest

44.1 The Chair gave a reminder to the board to declare any interests. No declarations of interest recorded.

45 Minutes and Matters Arising

45.1 The minutes of the meeting taken on the 18th September 2017 were checked for accuracy. Lisa Ashby confirmed that the Business Rates press release had been published following the last meeting. Gill Hamer confirmed that she would follow up with Tim Dafforn's office on the outcome of the engagement which took place at the last meeting. Tim did confirm that they would send feedback and a summary from the consultation. No further matters arising were recorded and the minutes confirmed as a correct record.

45.2 Apologies for absence were received from, William Morris, Tudor Griffiths, Beth Heath, Cllr Gwilym Butler, Tim Downes, Matt Bulley, Matt Snelson, Simon Thornley, James Staniforth, Paul Kirkbright.

46 Election of Chair and Vice Chair

46.1 Current Chair and Vice Chair, Mandy Thorn and Paul Bennett left the room before the nominations were announced.

46.2 Gemma Davies confirmed that 14 nominations had been received out of a possible 22 and it was unanimous vote with Mandy having 14 nominations and Paul also receiving 14 nominations. Both Mandy and Paul were therefore both re-elected. The Board were all in agreement that both do an excellent job and the nominations were seconded.

46.3 Arthur Hill noted that he was unhappy with the process and asked if more than a week could be given to submit nominations. Gemma Davies confirmed that Arthur's concerns around the process had been discussed outside of the meeting and acknowledged. It was agreed that a longer timescale would be given at the next election.

46.4 Mandy and Paul were invited back into the room and formally re-elected.

46.5 Mandy and Paul thanked the Board for their continued support but also added that they were keen to develop the roles, together with broadening and strengthening the Business Board. They confirmed that they would share their thoughts in a paper.

MT/PB

47 Enterprise Advisor Network Update

47.1 Shelley Robinson gave an informative update on the Enterprise Advisor Network specifically asking for the Boards assistance with two roles, one being a senior level Enterprise Advisor and the other role being more ad hoc in undertaking specific activities such as mock interviews. A question on CRB was raised and Shelley confirmed that she would arrange the CRB checks.

47.2 Shelley noted that she had brought leaflets along explaining the roles in more detail which Board members were welcome to take away with them. Lisa Ashby to circulate electronic copies. Richard Sheehan also

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noted that the Chamber of Commerce can help with sending any literature out regarding the network.

47.3 Shelley also reminded the Board of the Enterprise show which is taking place in Telford on Thursday 8th March.

47.4 The Chair noted that the Board were pleased that Shropshire now has this Enterprise Advisor in place.

48 Business Confidence – A State of the Nation

48.1 Gemma Davies gave an Economic update and review of the year. This covered the following;

- GVA
- Business and Sectors
- Business Start-ups and Deaths
- Earnings
- Economic Activity and Employment
- Unemployment.

48.2 Gemma also drew the Boards attention to the Portfolio Holder Annual Report which was circulated prior to the meeting. Paul Bennett highlighted that he felt the figure relating to £27.7 million investment by foreign owned companies was too low. Paul Bennett to give an update on the figure.

48.3 An interesting discussion took place around the statistics and headlines, particularly around low unemployment rates but businesses are trying to expand so this could potentially be causing a barrier to growth. Attracting staff into the area was discussed in detail. Richard Sheehan also pointed to the transition period of Brexit directly affecting consumer confidence and there being a general lack of confidence in the business community. Gareth Niblett from DWP added that 31% of those claiming JSA are inactive and could potentially benefit businesses in Shropshire. Gareth confirmed that there is now a mandatory Health and Work appointment that those on JSA must attend. Paul Bennett also pointed to actual stability in the jobs market being a barrier to growth. Claire Evans confirmed that the Shropshire Council Skills Plan would cover these areas of discussion.

48.4 Gemma Davies also gave an update on the Shropshire Local Plan Review which included work so far. Gemma confirmed that the Council are now at the preferred scale and distribution of growth stage and the consultation formally closes on 22nd December 2017. The key headlines can be found on the website and were contained in the presentation. The review of key strategic importance for ensuring a plan led approach to development and will maintain local control for growth and development up to 2036.

48.5 The Chair, Mandy Thorn declared an interest: Directly affected by SAMDev Site Allocations and Management of Development

48.6 A discussion was had around the table on housing allocations,

specifically related to the provision of lower value houses and the link to Economic Growth. Environmental factors were raised as a potential issue and consideration for the review. Mandy Stoker reported an issue at the moment with construction waste and questioned whether provision had been made for this. Gemma confirmed that Adrian Cooper from Planning Policy had involvement in this and that an answer would be made available through the Board.

48.7 George Candler gave an update on the Town Centre Project to redevelop three shopping centres within Shrewsbury. The Council has now approved proceeding with the acquisition and confirmed that this should complete by the 23rd January 2018. George outlined the reasons behind the acquisition and the benefits, linking the acquisition to the Big Town Plan and the opportunities to really place shape Shrewsbury. George noted that the acquisition demonstrated a focus to invest. The Board agreed that the projected rental yield and forecasted increase in footfall was very promising. Nic Laurens also added that this was a further indication that Shropshire is open for business and thanked Officers for all their hard work. Tony Bywater added that it was impressive that this had been achieved in such a short timescale. Paul Bennett added that it was the chance to see Shrewsbury as a destination and added that the Board would be keen to share ideas on making the project as effective as possible. The Chair echoed the Boards sentiments and added that it was refreshing to see the authority creating opportunities through investment.

49 Marketing Shropshire – MIPIM

49.1 Claire Evans gave an introduction to MIPIM which is the largest international property and development event/expo. It provides an ideal opportunity to promote Shropshire to investors as an investment location. The event is held in the South of France and Claire outlined the plan for Shropshire Council to have a presence and promote at the event to a global audience of developers. Claire noted that there was opportunity for the Board to be involved specifically around either joining council and partners on the visit through business sponsorship, ideas for innovative companies for the promotional film or being a critical friend as the marketing collateral and film is developed. claire.evans@shropshire.gov.uk

49.2 Paul Bennett noted that this was the ideal time to showcase our companies and suggested using John Pitchford and Richard Sheehan as a starting point for identifying suitable companies. The Chair added that it would be useful to know who is also going in terms of commercial partners so we can leverage contacts.

49.3 The Chair thanked Claire for her presentation.

49.4 Lisa Ashby to circulate copy of both presentations.

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50 Business Rates Models

50.1 Gemma Davies reported that there had been a 98% take up rate on the

current discretionary reliefs, the press release having helped raise awareness. When assessing future applications for Business Rate Relief a set economic criteria would be useful for discussing the viability of financial relief awarded by Shropshire Council.

50.2 Gemma asked for the Boards input into setting these key criteria, looking specifically at Shropshire's key Sectors, as identified in the Economic Growth Strategy and other key considerations such as job creation and encouraging investment. ALL

50.3 A suggestion was put forward to form a sub group to work on developing the criteria. Richard Sheehan, Lindsay Barton and Simon MacVicker were suggested as being best placed due to their roles representing businesses with the Chamber and FSB. Lisa Ashby to send a formal email to all members of the Board to ask for volunteers to sit on this group. LA

51 Round Table Update

51.1 The Chair advised that due to time constraints the round table update would need to be very brief.

51.2 Catherine Baxter – Harper Adams
Reported on the success that Harper Adams had in 2017 which culminated in receiving the royal honour of the Queens Anniversary Prize for its work leading innovation in agricultural engineering.

51.3 Simon MacVicker – Bridgnorth Aluminium/Shropshire Chamber
Simon reported that the market was looking good for next year, increasing volume and employing more staff. Simon also reported that the wider metal market also looked robust. Awaiting trade deal with the EU.

51.4 Gareth Niblett – DWP
Gareth confirmed that Universal Credit will go live in Shropshire in the New Year. It was scheduled for the 7th February but this has now been delayed until the 9th May. Awareness events will be run for employers and should mean a better experience for customers.

51.5 John Pitchford – Barclays Bank
John reported that 2017 had been a challenging year, although lending demands remain high.

51.6 Alison Wright – Starfish Advertising and Marketing Ltd
Alison reported that the creative sector continues to fragment with many starting up on their own. Richard Sheehan also echoed noticing the same trend. Alison also reported on a Growth Hub referral of a creative business looking to move to Shrewsbury.

51.7 Mandy Stoker – E4Environment
Mandy noted that there hadn't been a similar trend noticed of people setting up on their own in the environment sector. Mandy added that the New Year looked exciting with the University Centre Shrewsbury and

the new centre for research in environmental science and technology.

- 51.8 Tony Bywater – Salop Leisure
Tony reported a successful year and confidence about the future. Tony also noted that the new developments had been a great success and boosted visitors to the county.
- 51.9 Richard Sheehan – Shropshire Chamber of Commerce
Richard gave an update on the Quarterly Economic Survey which he had presented to the LEP Board. There were concerning figures around investments/trading but there has been an improvement in the latest monthly report. Richard also noted that they were developing their manufacturing partnership and running GDPR seminars supported by Paul.
- 51.10 Arthur Hill – Agriculture (incorporating an update on behalf of Tudor Griffiths)
Arthur reported steady growth for the building merchant's and with an increase in demand for aggregates. Areas to highlight include the Bridgnorth site which is doing very well and now has in excess of 22 staff on site. The Biomass plant in Ellesmere has gained permission and will be part of a 4m investment into the area. Farming Industry performing well despite recent snow fall. Arthur highlighted the helpful role farmers had played in clearing roads.
- 51.11 Gill Hamer – Marches LEP
Gill updated the Board on the Industrial Strategy and confirmed that the Secretary of State was due to come back following the consultation. Gill also confirmed that there was currently a refresh taking place on the SEP with a focus on sectors.
- 51.12 Paul Bennett – Shropshire Business Partnership
Gave an update on the Shropshire Business Partnership and confirmed that Aaron and Partners had seen significant investments in Shropshire with growth buoyant.

52 AOB

- 52.1 The Chair confirmed that the Marches LEP have agreed the provision of administrative support to cover the three Business Boards moving this away from the Local Authorities. The tender for this is due to go out in March 2018. The Chair thanked the Council for the Officer support provided.

52 Next Meeting Dates 2018

- 52.1 The proposed dates were agreed. Lisa Ashby to send electronic meeting invites

Monday 29th January 2018 9.30am-11.30am
Monday 5th March 2018 4.30pm-6.30pm
Tuesday 15th May 2018 4.30pm-6.30pm
Monday 9th July 2018 4.30pm-6.30pm

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Monday 10th September 2018 4.30pm-6.30pm
Monday 19th November 2018 4.30pm-6.30pm

