

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SHROPSHIRE BUSINESS BOARD

HELD ON
FRIDAY 7TH July 2017
9.30 am – 11.30 am

Present:

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| Mandy Thorn MBE (Chair) | Marches Care Ltd, Shrewsbury |
| Paul Bennett (Vice Chair) | Shropshire Business Partnership |
| Lindsay Barton | Golden Kite Solutions Ltd, FSB Representative |
| Catherine Baxter | Harper Adams University (Agri-technology sector rep) |
| James Staniforth | CEO and Principle of Shrewsbury Colleges Group |
| Arthur Hill | CH Hill & Sons, Much Wenlock |
| Gill Hamer | Director Marches LEP |
| Paul Kirkbright | University Centre Shrewsbury |
| Matthew Snelson | Grainger & Worrall Ltd |
| Simon MacVicker | Shropshire Chamber/Bridgnorth Aluminium |
| Kully Chahal | Department for Work and Pensions |
| William Morris | Utilities Representative – Managing Director of SSE Retail |
| Simon Thornley | Midcounties Cooperative |
| John Pitchford | Barclays Bank, Local Banking Representative |
| Alison Wright | Starfish Advertising and Marketing Ltd |
| Richard Lumby | Carillion PLC |
| Cllr Nic Laurens | Portfolio Holder for Enterprise and Growth, Shropshire Council |

In Attendance

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| Claire Evans | Economic Growth, Shropshire Council |
| Janine Vernon | Learning and Skills, Shropshire Council |
| Emma Smith | Performance, Intelligence and Policy Team, Shropshire Council |
| Sam Williams | HR Manager, Shropshire Council |
| Carolyn Madle | HR Officer, Shropshire Council |

Shropshire Council Officers

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| Gemma Davies | Head of Economic Growth |
| Lisa Ashby | Economic Growth Coordinator |

28 Welcome, Apologies and Introductions

- 28.1 The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and thanked James Staniforth for hosting the meeting at Shrewsbury College. James welcomed all to Shrewsbury College and gave a presentation on the Shrewsbury Colleges Group, which included what has been achieved since his appointment, future plans and also the background of the merger of Shrewsbury Sixth form College and Shrewsbury College of Arts and

Technology to form the Shrewsbury Colleges Group. James took questions from the Board and outlined the strategic priorities 2017-2020. A discussion on HE provision and skills took place and the board commended the College's ambitious plans. The chair noted that this was a good opportunity for the board to forge stronger links and work more closely with the College.

28.2 The Chair also welcomed new members and observers to the meeting including Simon Thorley from Midcounties Cooperative Society and Beth Heath from Shropshire Festivals, although Beth had sent apologies for this meeting. The chair confirmed that recruitment to the Board is still ongoing in terms of broadening the business representation.

28.3 Apologies for absence were received from, George Candler [Director of Place and Enterprise, Shropshire Council], Tony Bywater [Salop Leisure], Gareth Niblett [DWP], Mandy Stoker [E4Environment], Tudor Griffiths [Tudor Griffiths Ltd], Richard Lumby [Carillion PLC], Chris Lewis [Cyber Security Representative].

29 Declarations of Interest

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

30 Minutes and Matters Arising

30.1 The minutes of the meeting taken on the 22nd May 2017 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.

30.2 Gill Hamer gave an update on the progress of the Industrial Strategy and confirmed that BIES are in the process of responding to the varied responses. Gill thanked again those who had contributed towards this consultation response. Gill also confirmed that government were taking a positive view on Growth Hubs and confirmed that they were looking to expand provision with future funding. Through consultation it had been identified that SME's preferred the local focus of Growth Hubs and also the provision of a physical hub. Gill reported that future provision is likely to focus on firms who are aspiring to grow. Gill also noted that there was a push back to hubs bringing local providers together. The chair thanked Gill and the Marches LEP for the continued work they are undertaking influencing government on behalf of Shropshire businesses.

30.3 The Chair confirmed that the Terms of Reference for the Board had been amended following the last meeting and that these would be circulated following the meeting.

MT/LA

31 Apprenticeship Levy Update – Sam Williams, Shropshire Council

31.1 Sam Williams gave an update on the Apprenticeship Levy following her last update to the Board in November. Sam's update included a recap of the Levy and what Shropshire Council had implemented to date. Sam also confirmed that they had renamed the Shropshire Council levy 'Upskill Shropshire' in view of the way apprenticeships are structured and delivered and there being no upper age limit.

31.2 There was an in-depth discussion around the table on upskilling employees, particularly in regards to upskilling those already employed in businesses. Sam spoke about the 'trailblazer' apprenticeship development and working with employers to help develop apprenticeships.

31.3 The Board thanked Sam for a clear and informative presentation. Sam Williams to send link to apprenticeship resources referred to in presentation and an email address for any questions regarding the Upskill Shropshire Framework.

LA/SW

32 Skills Plan Update – Claire Evans

32.1 Claire gave an overview of the Shropshire Skills Plan, covering the objectives and approach taken. Claire outlined the six broad action areas that the Skills Plan will cover; Attract and retain talent, careers advice and guidance, priority sector skills plan, entrepreneurship and innovation, apprenticeship strategy and widening participation and access to employment.

32.2 Claire also outlined six areas of focus which included; Shropshire's demographic, business participation, further sector-specific research, connectivity and increasing routes to employment, addressing perceptions and galvanising further partner engagement to bring investment and delivery to Shropshire.

32.3 Claire confirmed that next steps would be the formulation of action plans to sit alongside the skills plan. A robust discussion followed around the areas of focus and how collaborative work could be developed. Claire highlighted the importance of further partnership working and the requirement to galvanise support to address specific skills issues and support future collaborative engagement.

32.4 Janine Vernon confirmed that there would be a Careers and Enterprise Coordinator role created from the beginning of August to provide a collaborative link between businesses and training providers. The chair confirmed that the board would be keen to see an enterprise coordinator who would foster closer links between businesses and schools.

32.5 Opportunities around the Higher Education cluster were raised,

particularly advanced manufacturing and agri tech. The board also discussed the value of stats and that these should be more transparent in terms of workforce and skills, especially as the intention is for the plan to sit alongside the Marches LEP Skills Plan.

32.6 Various discussions took place around the promotion of Shropshire as a county and its potential for inward investment. Sectors were also discussed, particularly in relation to building the profile of the county and provision of support, such as incubator space. Building profile with the government was also discussed, particularly in view of the various lobbying documents. Gemma Davies confirmed it was a key time for shaping as skills are included for example within the housing agenda, Local Plan, and Economic Growth Strategy and important to know what the challenges are for Shropshire. Gemma also confirmed that there would be opportunity to input into shaping groups to take forward the skills ambitions of the county.

32.7 The chair highlighted that there was a need to attract more people to the county to live and work and that this links to the availability of affordable housing and provision of a good quality base for young professionals and families.

32.8 The Chair thanked Claire for an informative presentation. Claire Evans to circulate a Skills Plan Summary Document.

LA/CE

33 Round Table Update from Business Board Members

33.1 The Chair highlighted that due to extended discussion the update should be from the Higher Education representatives who were unable to deliver an update at the last meeting.

University Centre Shrewsbury

33.2 Paul Kirkbright gave an informative update to the Board, including some key headlines such as the Environmental Science and Technology Centre launching in September and expanding the academic team. Paul also reported good student stats.

33.3 Refurbishment work is also being undertaken at Guildhall and this is due to complete at the end of August. Work being undertaken on the student accommodation at The Tannery, Barker Street and Paul acknowledged his thanks to Shropshire Council in terms of their support with this project.

33.4 Paul noted that they are working on an SME innovation report.

33.5 Paul confirmed that they are waiting on the publication of the national Higher Education Policy which will provide insight into the challenges within the sector.

Harper Adams University

33.6 Catherine Baxter gave an informative update to the Board. Reported a

national downturn in applications for Higher Education places starting in the autumn.

33.7 Catherine reported on Harpers success securing a gold in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). The board congratulated Catherine and Harper Adams on this fantastic achievement. Catherine also noted that the government funded innovation hub for agricultural technology is now open, with work is ongoing on the Newport innovation campus.

33.8 Catherine also reported that Midlands Today had reported on the "Hands Free Hectare" project which is an agricultural field robot which is part of research looking into using only robots and autonomous vehicle to sow, look after and harvest a field.

34 AOB

34.1 Gemma Davies notified the board of the date of the Economic Growth Strategy Launch. The launch will be taking place on the morning of the 26th September and invitations will follow shortly.

34.2 It was also noted that the consultation on Shropshire Council's new car parking strategy is now open. Lisa Ashby to send link. LA

35 Next Meeting Dates 2017

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| Monday 18 th September 2017 | Harper Adams |
| Monday 27 th November 2017 | Shirehall, Shrewsbury |