

Herefordshire Business Board

Notes / Actions from the Meeting – Tuesday 2nd October 2012

Present:

Chair: Neil Kerr (NK), **Vice Chair:** Ray Stone (RS), Angela Fitch (AF), Cathy Meredith (CM), Helen Thomas (HT), Jonathan Hines (JH), Joseph Connor (JC), Paul Sinclair (PS), Peter Brown (PB), Phil Collins (PC), Richard Garnett (RG).

Apologies: Andy Edwards (AE), Ian Hilditch (IH), Mike Ashton (MA), Cllr Roger Phillips (RP), Rachel Jones (RJ), Nick Webster (NW).

1. Apologies

Apologies noted.

2. Herefordshire Food Strategy (In attendance: Peter Norton)

Peter Norton described a food strategy – From field to Table – and the issues facing the agriculture businesses in Herefordshire. The strategy covers the economic, social and environmental impact of the industry and the development of an action from the aims and objectives. Peter presented statistics relating to the various produce grown in Herefordshire as well as covering the level of food imports into the area and the UK. Food security is seen as a major issue facing the UK and as a result of the study 163 actions have been identified.

3. Reaching the Heart of Horticulture (In attendance: Anthony Snell)

Antony Snell gave a presentation on his fruit business and the wider issues of the NFU. Issues discussed at the meeting included the reliance on migrant workers to harvest crops – this was surprising given the level of unemployment in the UK. The issue around this and the possible change in legislation affecting migrant workers was discussed in some detail. The importance of the food industry in Herefordshire to the local economy was well addressed hence any changes to the seasonal agriculture workers scheme (SAWS) would have a major impact on growers in the county. Challenges facing the industry include planning, access to labour, water and energy supply and access to high quality training.

The Business Board expressed their support for economic growth in the agriculture and horticulture industry in Herefordshire.

4. Chair Update

Marches LEP

NK gave an update on the Marches LEP performance and the major issues being addressed. Much of the LEP actions appear to be related to attracting funds for various projects across the region. Regarding the business board, Neil explained the role is to create economic initiatives for the county. However, there is an issue of resource – or lack of it – and this need to be addressed by the LEP. There followed a long discussion regarding legal status, roles, responsibilities and authority which need to be defined more clearly. The business board is an unelected body and has no legal status and relies on pro bono support from members of the board. There has already been some push back on the input from the private sector and this now needs to be addressed urgently. It was agreed that a small sub group of PB, JC and RS will attempt to draw up draft terms of reference before the next meeting in December. **Action:** PB, JC, RS

5. HBB Work Plan Update

Education and Training

RS gave an update on the education and training task group. A misunderstanding regarding who was leading this group was resolved and a meeting with CM and AF will be arranged to ensure “joined up” thinking. The Art College and HCT are to produce a video for schools showing careers and new job opportunities coming to Herefords. Jesse Norman has asked Karen Usher to lead on the Hereford University proposal

High Growth Business

JC gave an update on the high growth business initiatives. More time will be made available at the next meeting as the meeting was over running.

Development Land

CM will give more information on business parks at the next meeting. RS had details of at least 74 business parks across the county.

City Centre rejuvenation

JJ will expand on the more at the next meeting in December.

Super-Fast Broadband

NK gave an update on the broad band project. Only one company ended up bidding for the contract. Negotiations are ongoing to sort out the final details.

6. AOB

The board thanked Richard Garnett and his wife for providing the room and refreshments for the board meeting

7. Date of next meeting: Tuesday 4th December – venue tbc