

Herefordshire Business Board (HBB)
Notes/Actions from the meeting held on
Monday 18 March 2024, 5.00 – 6.00 pm
Held at The Green Dragon Hotel, Hereford HR4 9BG

Attendees:

Chair: Frank Myers MBE (FM) **Present:** Christian Dangerfield (CD); David Williams (DW); Helen Bowden (HB), James Newby (JN); Nic Millington (NM); Paul Stevens (PS); Stephen Eckley (SE)

In attendance: Roger Allonby (RA)

Apologies: Abigail Appleton; Christine Snell; Gareth Williams; Cllr Graham Biggs; John Reed; Sharon Smith

Absent: Mark Pearce

Minutes: Jan Bailey

Action Log

Minute	Action	Responsibility
5.8	Set up Task and Finish Group meeting	FM/JB
5.12	Draft response to GB letter dated 5 March	FM/HB
5.13	Write to all HBB members to update them on the decisions taken today.	FM

1.

Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2.

Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

2.1

Apologies and absences are as noted above.

2.2

DW declared an interest as the Skills Board Representative on the Economy and Place Board.

Action

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

4. Matters Arising (not covered elsewhere on the agenda)

None

5. The Future of Herefordshire Business Board

- 5.1 The Chair provided a summary of the background to the HBB. He highlighted discussions in 2021 on the development of new Terms of Reference for the group, which had been deferred, at the Council's suggestion, pending forthcoming expected changes at the LEP. He also reminded the Board that he had been re-elected Chair of the Business Board at around the same time, with no other candidates coming forward.

- 5.2 The Chair also reminded members of the background to the Economy and Place Board: he had been invited to sit on the steering group and develop Terms of Reference for this group, but these had been changed following the change in administration at the Council. Following an exercise to recruit a chair to this Board, a decision had been taken by the Council for this to be chaired not by a business representative as had been agreed but by the Leader of the Council.

- 5.3 The Chair referred to papers circulated to members prior to today's meeting: a letter from Graham Biggs (GB) regarding Herefordshire Business Representation; a document entitled 'Business Representation Post Local Enterprise Partnership'; and a letter from Mark Schneider confirming financial support for the future administration of the Herefordshire Business Board, subject to certain conditions. These are included at Appendix A.

- 5.4 Board members regretted the reference in GB's letter to the Nolan Principles as they said the Herefordshire Business Board has always operated in accordance with these.

- 5.5 RA referred to the Government's document: ['Guidance for local authorities delivering business representation and local economic planning functions'](#), published in December 2023. He said the council would be assessed according to the criteria laid out in this document, hence the Herefordshire Business Board should focus on how it will develop and

change to meet these requirements if it wants to be part of the Economy and Place Board.

- 5.6** RA said the key requirements of the above document relate to the way in which Board members are recruited and its Terms of Reference. In particular, ensuring that the Board is representative of the county's key industrial sectors, geographical spread, age and ethnicity characteristics. He accepted that it is difficult to meet all these criteria, but that the Board should aim to do so insofar as it can. The Chair reiterated that the terms of reference tabled in 2021 dealt with all of these matters.
- 5.7** The Board discussed what this meant for their current membership and whether they should step down with immediate effect.
- 5.8** PS **proposed** that current members work with the council to deliver what is required but set a specific date for their resignations. **This was agreed** and a Steering Group will be established to take this forward. Future HBB Board meetings are therefore suspended and Task and Finish Group meetings will be arranged, followed by one final Board meeting at which it would be hoped to adopt new terms of reference. FM/JB
- 5.9** RA confirmed that the Council will be fully engaged with this process, including support with the recruitment process for new members, including payment for advertising, and attendance at the Steering Group.
- 5.10** DW advised that he would not wish to be part of the steering group due to his conflict of interest (see 2.2 above).
- 5.11** The Chair asked the Board to take into account the consequences of winding up of the Herefordshire Business Board and the vacuum that would be left in the interim. In particular that he represents the Board on a number of other committees and initiatives.
- 5.12** The Chair and HB will draft a letter of response to GB and circulate to the Board for comment/approval before sending this to him. Note: a response is required to GB by the end of March. FM/HB
- 5.13** The Chair will write to all current HBB Board members to explain decisions taken at today's meeting and next steps. FM
- 6. Any Other Business**

None.

7. Date of Next Meeting

Task and Finish Group meeting dates to be confirmed.

Next scheduled Board meeting
Monday 3 June

**Herefordshire Business Board (HBB)
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Appendix A (i) – Letter from Cllr Graham Biggs to Frank Myers



Economy and Environment

Our Ref:
Please ask for: Graham Biggs
Direct Line / Extension:
E-mail: Graham.Biggs@herefordshire.gov.uk

Frank Myers
Herefordshire Business Board

5 March 2024

Dear Frank,

Herefordshire Business Representation

As agreed at the last Business Board meeting, please find enclosed a paper which sets out the government guidance for local Business representation following their decision to cease funding Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).

The paper was considered at the first meeting of the Economy and Place Board on the 19th February. The Economy and Place Board agreed that the paper reflected both the national and local requirements for business representation going forward, recognising the critical role that the private sector makes to the Herefordshire economy.

The government guidance clearly sets out, in accordance with the Nolan principles, a need for an open approach to the recruitment with maximum terms for representation. The guidance also identifies a need for representation to be balanced across the breadth of local business size, key local sectors, demographics and geography.

The Economy and Place Board recognises the valued role of existing Business Board in contributing to the former Marches LEP. However, in meeting the new government requirements, changes are required if the current Business Board is to become the recognised business representative board for Herefordshire going forward.

We would be happy to discuss how these changes may be implemented, and any support that the council may be able to provide to the Business Board during this period of transition. As the new government arrangements are due to commence from April 2024, when the Marches LEP will cease operations, we would please ask that a plan is in place to implement these changes from the end of March 2024.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to meet to discuss next steps, and any help we may be able to provide.

Yours sincerely;

Graham Biggs
Cabinet Member for Economy and Growth

Appendix A(ii) - Business Representation Post Local Enterprise Partnership

Purpose: To consider how Herefordshire will meet the government's requirements for business representation following the closure of the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership.

Background

On 4 August 2023 government confirmed that they would no longer provide funding to Local Enterprise Partnerships, and will instead support combined and upper tier local authorities to deliver the functions currently delivered by LEPs. The government stated that this will '*empower democratically elected local leaders to work with the private sector to support local businesses and drive local economic growth*'.

One of the functions due to transfer is local business representation. To support the transition government has published guidance in August and December 2023 [Guidance for local authorities delivering business representation and local economic planning functions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/guidance-for-local-authorities-delivering-business-representation-and-local-economic-planning-functions).

The following summarises the government requirements in terms of business representation, and how we will seek to meet these in Herefordshire.

Business Representation Role

The government guidance states that the Levelling Up White Paper was clear about the importance of having institutions that are both empowered and accountable to local democratically elected leaders. They state that principles of effective, independent and diverse business representation, which were a common connection across all LEP functions, should remain in these institutional structures.

Based on the national guidance, and the local requirements in terms of supporting the Economy and Place Board, the core role of the business representative board would be (but not limited to) to;

- Private sector and employer perspectives on the development of and implementation of local economic strategies and interventions, representing key local sectors, varying business size, and geography
- Supporting and overseeing development and delivery business support services, such as the Herefordshire Growth Hub and grants delivered through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural Prosperity Fund.
- Providing challenge and insight on business impacts of public sector initiatives
- Providing delivery expertise and market credibility and a strong vehicle for leveraging match funding for public sector programmes
- Developing effective partnership projects to support growth. Demonstrating a strong business voice is also an eligibility requirement for some government

Requirements of the Business Representation Group

The government guidance published in August 2023 states that business representative boards should follow the below guiding principles:

- Clear Terms of Reference in meeting the required business reorientation role in terms of meeting the above responsibilities. Commitment to Nolan principles.
- Involve business representative organisations, such as a local Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses; or the designated Employer Representative Body (ERB) developing the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP);

- Include a diverse range of businesses related to local economic strengths and priorities. This should include businesses of all sizes and businesses which are geographically diverse, e.g., urban, rural, coastal businesses as appropriate to the local area;
- Ensure a diversity of voices; and
- Have a clear conflict of interest policy.

The December 2023 guidance also identifies a range of questions for Local Authorities to consider in forming or supporting the evolution of business representative organisations;

1. How might membership of the Board be selected and recruited in an open and transparent process, to ensure that they meet the above criteria? How might this be maintained as membership is refreshed?
2. How would membership of the board be managed? For example, requirements within any Memorandum of Understanding, including conflict of interest and confidentiality, and how these would be managed? Are there time limits, gateway criteria or disqualification/removal procedures?
3. What links do the members of the business board have to the wider business community and representatives of key economic growth sectors?
4. Would other local economic partners outside of the business community add value to the board?

Herefordshire Business Representative Board

In considering the above requirements of government, we would need to implement the following;

- Terms of Reference – establishing Terms of Reference that meet the new government requirements, and a commitment to Nolan principles (in terms of recruitment and maximum terms).
- Recruitment – Board members should be openly recruited through inviting expressions of interests to ensure that there is a fair and equal opportunity for people to be involved on the Board, and that representation remains current to live opportunities and issues, representation should be reviewed on a 3 year cycle.
- Representation – The board should include representatives from the key local business sectors identified in the Herefordshire Economic Plan such as cyber security, food and drink, agriculture, tourism, engineering, defence, creative industries. The Board should include representatives from all business sizes, reflecting the local make up of the business base and from across the county geography. The representatives should either currently own, or be actively employed in, an existing business preferably based within Herefordshire in the sector/ geography/ specialism they represent.
- Chair - should be selected by the Board (from within the representation) and be reviewed every 2 years.
- Frequency of Meetings - The Board will set the frequency of meetings, but should be a minimum of quarterly.
- Open meetings – Meetings should be open to the public for businesses to attend if they would like to. For example, quarterly public meetings with an open Q&A for section for any businesses choosing to attend to raise questions.

Appendix A (iii) – Letter from Mark Schneider, Marches LEP



Marches Local Enterprise Partnership
Cameron House, Knights Court, Archers Way
Battlefield Enterprise Park
Shrewsbury SY1 3GA

Frank Myers
Chair, Herefordshire Business Board

6th March 2024

Dear Mr Myers,

Re: Provision of financial support for the future administration of Herefordshire Business Board

I would like to confirm that following the Marches LEP Board Meeting on the 28th November 2023, it has been agreed the Marches LEP will provide funding to the Herefordshire Business Board of £1,000 per annum towards the administration costs, for a period of 5 years, a total figure of £5,000. This sum has been made available under the stipulation that the Herefordshire Business Board continues to represent the wider business community in Herefordshire and has the full support and confidence of Herefordshire Council. You will need to claim the funding in arrears and on production of invoices from Shropshire Council. The relevant contact will be: gary.spencer@shropshire.gov.uk

Would you please confirm whether you would like to accept this funding, no later than Friday 8th January please.

Yours sincerely

Mark Schneider
Head of Business Development and Delivery
Marches LEP

c.c. Matt Potts, Shropshire Council,|