

**MINUTES of the meeting of Marches Enterprise Joint Committee held at The Clive, Bromfield, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY8 2JR on Tuesday 19 March 2019 at 4.45 pm**

**Present:** Councillor S Davies (Chairman)

Councillors: JG Lester and PA Nutting  
Mr G Wynn OBE (Non-voting member)

**Officers:** Nicholas Alamanos, Gill Hamer and Claire Ward

**31. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies.

**32. NAMED SUBSTITUTES (IF ANY)**

There were no substitutes.

**33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**34. MINUTES**

**It was resolved that the minutes of the meeting of 24 July 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the chairperson.**

**35. MARCHES LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP STRATEGIC ECONOMIC PLAN**

The LEP Director introduced the strategic economic plan. She set out the extensive consultation that had taken place on the draft document including input from each of the member councils. The plan reflected the economic priorities set out by each of the councils, had been approved by the LEP Board and was ready for publication. The plan would be distributed digitally as far as possible but there would be some print copies produced.

The councils' representatives indicated their support for the plan.

**It was resolved that:**

**(a) the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership Strategic Economic Plan at Appendix 1 be approved; and**

**(b) The LEP Director be authorised to make typographical and formatting changes to the document before publication.**

**36. FUTURE OF THE MARCHES ENTERPRISE JOINT COMMITTEE (MEJC)**

The LEP Director explained the background to the report. The government had instructed all LEPs to form companies and new guidance made clear that the Board of Directors must be the ultimate decision maker. As a result, the joint committee would no longer have any function. The proposals had been discussed with the monitoring officers

and other relevant officers of each council with the result that it was recommended to cease the joint committee.

The three member councils would have the right to become Public Sector Members of the new company and to each appoint a director to the board. The draft articles of association for the new company had been circulated and the LEP Director drew attention to clause 7.2, which set out the proposed rights of consultation and engagement for the Public Sector Members.

The LEP Director explained that while the councils would no longer have the final say on matters which had previously fallen to the joint committee, they would have a voice as 3 out of the 15 directors of the new company. It was important that the board of directors and the LEP Director be held to account and it was proposed that regular attendance be scheduled at scrutiny meetings at each of the member councils. This would likely be twice a year in September/October and March/April and would include reference to the annual delivery plan.

The LEP Director acknowledged that the councils would continue to be key strategic partners in delivery of LEP schemes. Democratic accountability would be maintained through the councils' appointments to the board of directors and attendance at scrutiny sessions. All board papers would in future be in the public domain.

The chair of the LEP board commented that the previous governance arrangements had worked well and this had previously been recognised by the government. However not all LEPs nationally had such strong governance and as a result the government had imposed this new structure.

In discussion of the report, the leaders of the three member councils stated that:

- The proposals diluted the importance of local government representation in the LEP but it was recognised that there was no alternative;
- Local councils would still have a responsibility to deliver economic growth in their area;
- The dynamics of the LEP could change with the new structure and it would be a challenge to ensure that councils continued to reflect the geography of the LEP area as a whole;
- The joint committee had worked well and had respected the LEP Board, it had not sought to veto decisions but instead had worked to resolve any disagreements, this approach should be carried on into the new structure;
- Morally weight should be given to the views of the three Public Sector Directors on the board as they represented not only the three member councils but the whole of their communities.

The leaders of the three councils noted that there were no alternative options but stressed that the previous ethos and good working relationship between the councils and the LEP should carry forward into the new arrangements.

**It was resolved that:**

- (a) subject to confirmation of the Marches LEP Board support for the new governance arrangements required by government agreement is given to:**
- **the establishment of the Marches LEP as a private company limited by guarantee; and**
  - **the Marches Joint Executive Committee ceasing to operate with effect from 31 March 2019.**

The meeting ended at 4.56 pm

**CHAIRMAN**