

Minutes of the meeting of Marches Joint Committee held at Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Thursday 7 March 2024 at 2.00 pm

Committee members present in person and voting:

**Councillor Lezley Picton (chairperson, Shropshire Council)
Councillor Lee Carter (Telford and Wrekin Council)
Councillor Jonathan Lester (Herefordshire Council)**

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies were received.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. TRANSFER AGREEMENT AND AGREEING THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Service Director Economy and Growth presented a report on the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership Transfer Agreement where functions are due to transfer from the LEP to the newly established Marches Joint Committee. The terms of reference were also considered as part of the report.

The members thanked the officers involved in the process and thanked the LEP for all of the work they have done. The Leader of Herefordshire Council put on record his thanks and gratitude for all those involved in the LEP.

The Chair (The Leader of Shropshire Council) proposed that the recommendations be adopted.

The motion was put to the vote and was carried unanimously.

4. BUSINESS REPRESENTATION

The Director for Housing, Employment & Infrastructure (Telford and Wrekin Council) spoke on the item. The main points raised were:

1. The three local authorities are fully committed to working with the private sector following the LEP.
2. Each area has an established business representation group which has fed into the LEP to date.
3. The business representative boards will be fully engaged and consulted on any key decisions of the joint committee.
4. The Marches Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) was adopted last year and remains the overarching plan for the Marches area.
5. Across all three authorities, economic strategies have been adopted over the last twelve months which reflect the foundations of the Marches SEP and the local priorities for each area.

6. In terms of business support, throughout the tenure of the LEP, all three local authorities have resourced local business support and inward investment teams. They remain in place and will continue.
7. The LEP has operated a website and referral system, however, has not provided direct business support which instead has come through the local authorities. No changes are planned to this.
8. Government guidance is anticipated in relation to the future of growth hubs and the funding to follow. In the short-term, through the transfer agreement, there has been a seamless transfer of the growth hub website and brand. Shropshire Council is the accountable body and will be supported by Herefordshire Council and Telford and Wrekin Council.
9. All three local authorities have UKSPF programmes and will continue to provide business support for the business community.

The Director of Place (Shropshire Council) noted that the Shropshire Economic Partnership is being included on the development and activity of business representation.

The Leader of Herefordshire Council added that Herefordshire Council is in the process of establishing an Economy and Place Board which will ensure that there is a structure for business engagement.

The Service Director Economy and Growth added that an Economic Plan has been adopted and are aiming to develop a new board to bring together place shaping and business support activities. An existing Herefordshire Business Board is in place which feeds into the LEP structure for a number of years. Government guidance is currently being considered around the LEP transition to ensure that the business representative board is fully meeting the guidance. Business representation will be at the core of the Joint Committee and the Economy and Place Board to enhance private sector engagement.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Govin Aujla (Department for Business and Trade) noted that government are keen to see a collective voice being filtered up through the joint partnership.

6. FUTURE MEETINGS

The members considered the suggested dates of future joint committee meetings. These dates would be confirmed in due course.

The Chair formally closed the meeting.

The meeting ended at 2.22 pm

Chairperson