

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE BOARD 24 MAY 2019

ANNUAL REPORT ON WORCESTERSHIRE LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP (WLEP)

Summary

1. This report has been written to provide Worcestershire County Council's Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board (OSPB) with an annual update on the achievements of the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (WLEP) over the last 12 months and to outline strategic objectives for 2019/20.
2. The Chairman and Chief Executive of the WLEP, the Leader of the Council (who is also Vice Chairman, Local Authority Representative of the WLEP), the Chair of the WLEP Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, and the Section 151 Officer have been invited to the Meeting.
3. In addition, District Councils have been invited to nominate a Councillor representative to attend the Meeting.

Background – What are Local Enterprise Partnerships?

4. Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) are partnerships between local authorities, further and higher education and local businesses. They were set up in 2011 by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, and are recognised by central government as the primary vehicle to help determine local economic priorities and lead economic growth and job creation within the local area.
5. There are 38 LEPs nationally and their role has developed considerably since inception. In March 2014, WLEP produced their Strategic Economic Plan (SEP), a national requirement of all LEPs. This plan sets out the strategic approach for achieving sustained economic growth across Worcestershire and is a key component in securing future government funding for infrastructure and development projects essential for economic success across the county.
6. The Worcestershire SEP was agreed by all partner organisations in March 2014. WLEP is, therefore, working to achieve a number of ambitious objectives by 2025. These are to:
 - Create 25,000 jobs
 - Increase Gross Value Added (GVA)¹ by £2.9billion; and
 - Contribute towards the delivery of 21,500 new homes
7. In response to the publication of LEP's Strategic Economic Plans, the Government announced 'Local Growth Deals' for each LEP area. These Local

¹ Gross value added (GVA) is the measure of the value of goods and services produced in an area, industry or sector of an economy.

Growth Deals (known as the Local Growth Fund) bring together previously separate funding streams for infrastructure, housing, skills and other areas into one place for LEPs to invest with their knowledge of what is needed in their respective areas to deliver socio-economic success.

8. In May 2018, OSPB received a report and presentation from the WLEP Chair, CEO and a WLEP Board Member to outline the scrutiny, audit and governance arrangements in place for WLEP. At this meeting, it was agreed that WLEP would submit a report to OSPB on an annual basis to outline achievements and a forward look for the next 12 months.

National Government LEP Review – Strengthened Local Enterprise Partnerships

9. In Spring 2018, Central Government’s Public Accounts Committee (PAC) met to review the position of LEPs which led to calls for improvements to be made in the governance and transparency arrangements of LEPs.

10. In July 2018, central government published the *Strengthened Local Enterprise Partnerships* report which outlined a series of recommendations for LEPs along with a number of government commitments to support LEPs with their implementation.

11. The report broadly covered 2 key areas, the first was a requirement to remove overlaps in LEP geographies to ensure clearer accountability for any future public funding, and the second was a number of measures to incorporate transparency and accountability best practice into all LEPs, for example establishing LEPs as a legal entity, increasing the private sector ratio of LEP Boards to two thirds, and improving the diversity of membership across LEPs nationally (both from a gender and BAME perspective).

12. On 13 May, the Public Accounts Committee will meet again to consider the National Audit Office’s (NAO) second report on LEPs which covers three main areas:

- changes to the role and remit of LEPs since last NAO report in 2016;
- the Department’s and LEPs’ progress with strengthening governance, assurance and transparency; and
- consider the funding spent through LEPs to date and future funding arrangements.

13. WLEP have responded to each of the recommendations of the Strengthened Local Enterprise Partnerships report in line with government’s timescales and have implemented some key arrangements in line with the LEP Review as follows:

- Recruited an additional three private sector board members to comply with the 66% requirement (this recruitment has resulted in a WLEP board comprising of 14 members with 71% private sector membership)
- WLEP now has a legal personality, having been registered as a Company Limited by Guarantee – effective from 1 April 2019 (*note: this remains in a non-trading state*)
- Developed a WLEP Delivery Plan for 2019/20 which will be published on WLEP website at the end of May 2019

- Established and implemented external scrutiny arrangements with Accountable Body

14. The overlapping geography issue remains outstanding, but a meeting between WLEP, GBSLEP and the Minister for the Northern Powerhouse and Local Growth, Jake Berry MP is being scheduled in June 2019 with a view to seeking a resolution.

Key Successes and Achievements 2018/19

15. Alongside addressing a considerable number of governance requirements set out by Government, WLEP have continued to deliver projects benefitting Worcestershire residents and businesses.

16. WLEP have successfully secured funding from central Government, which includes £71m of Growth Deal Funding, £5m of DCMS funding, £54.5m of Major Projects Funding for Carrington Bridge dualling and €68m funding via our EU programme. All of which has also enabled delivery of a number of key projects that are providing local businesses with the skills and infrastructure needed to succeed and expand.

17. These projects include a range of schemes to improve, for example, skills, rail connectivity, access to key employment sites and infrastructure including Superfast Broadband and the UK's first 5G-enabled test bed for Industry 4.0 applications.

18. Some examples of key successes and achievements in 2018/19 are provided below:

- In February 2019, WLEP were part of a local consortium of partners that saw the UK's first 5G-enabled factory trials go live at Worcester Bosch. 5G promises to revolutionise the way future business will operate both in the UK and globally, with early research suggesting productivity improvements of 1%, which equates to billions of pounds when considered at a national level.
- In October 2018, WLEP launched BetaDen, the county's first Technology Accelerator, which hosts seven Worcestershire-based entrepreneurs and provides a revolutionary platform for businesses to develop next-generation technology, such as the Internet of Things (IoT) and applications for Industry 4.0.
- In March 2019, WLEP launched the county's Energy Strategy following a 10-month development period working with partners and local stakeholders to inform ambitious targets to reduce carbon emissions across the county by 2030, as well as increasing renewable generation of energy and the size of the low carbon economy.
- In November 2018, at the WLEP Annual Conference, a new Worcestershire brand was launched to delegates, which included 400 businesses. This new brand includes access to a library of high-quality digital materials to promote and showcase the county to a wider audience. There are now plans to target 1,000 brand ambassadors to promote the county and support inward investment.
- In March 2019, WLEP held the annual Skills Show at the Chateau Impney Hotel which saw over 5,000 young people attend to learn about career opportunities from over 100 local employers.

- Throughout 2018/19 a number of high quality modern educational facilities were opened and launched as a result of WLEP investment, including the Centre of Digital Engineering at Heart of Worcestershire College and the Evesham Engineering Centre in partnership with Warwickshire College Group, ensuring Worcestershire continues to invest in skills for the future workforce.
- 2018/19 also saw WLEP lead a number of inward investment missions including hosting of a French cyber delegation at the Malvern Hills Science Park, which has led to a developing relationship with potential markets in France. Similarly, Worcestershire delegations visited Israel and Austria to showcase the opportunities afforded by Worcestershire and Cyber Valley.
- In 2018/19, WLEP attracted companies from Australia and Ireland to locate in Worcestershire, with further potential companies from Israel to follow. Worcestershire came out as the businesses preferred location as the county is developing a reputation as being at the cutting edge of technology, with a leading cluster of tech firms and supportive business environment in situ.
- In March 2019, construction of Phase 5 of the Malvern Hills Science Park was completed. This has extended the park with 16,000 sq ft of additional floor space for new companies or existing tenants seeking to grow their business and is now actively being marketed.

19. This is by no means an exhaustive list but provides a flavour of the range and scale of the initiatives that WLEP have identified and led on as part of a wider partnership for the economic prosperity of Worcestershire. Further examples of successes and achievements from 2018/19 can be seen in WLEP's 2018 Annual Report.

Financial Overview

20. Worcestershire County Council acts as the Accountable Body for WLEP and undertakes the budget monitoring, forecasting and control on behalf of the WLEP and provides financial challenge to the Board. The Head of Finance attends the WLEP Board, as an observer, on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer and has a valued input into all board reports prior to despatch and holds the Board to account on financial issues.

21. Table 1 shows WLEP's Local Growth Fund (LGF) profile (2015/16 – 2020/21), which represents a total funding allocation of £71.725m.

Table 1 - LEP Local Growth Fund Profile 2015/16 – 2020/21

	Growth Deal 1/2/3 Profile						Total
	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	
GD 1 & 2	13,400,000	24,153,000	15,325,957	1,336,400			54,215,357
GD3				3,516,687	3,624,437	10,368,876	17,510,000
Combined	13,400,000	24,153,000	15,325,957	4,853,087	3,624,437	10,368,876	71,725,357
Rounded	13,400	24,153	15,326	4,853	3,624	10,369	71,725

22. The WLEP funding for 2018/19 was £4.853m and the total outturn for the financial year has maximised the funding available so that there is no overall variance.

Furthermore, all schemes have recorded sufficient eligible expenditure to allow for full use of the Growth Deal funding as allocated by the WLEP Board, with no individual variances in-year. This is shown in detail at **Table 2**.

23. Table 2 also shows the use of Growth Deal monies across schemes in 2018/19, and the budgets for Growth Deal funding across schemes 2019/20.

Table 2 – 2018/2019 Outturn and 2019/20 Budget for Growth Deal Capital Funding

2018/19 and 2019/20 Schemes	2018/19 LGF Budget (£000)	2018/19 Spend Claimed from LGF (£000)	Variation (£000)	2019/20 LGF Budget (£000)
Kidderminster Railway Station	1,098	1,098	0	0
The Kiln	195	195	0	0
Bromsgrove A38	1,000	1,000	0	750
Pershore Northern Link Improvements	500	500	0	700
Churchfields Urban Highways Improvements	255	255	0	192
Duckworth Centre of Engineering (HoW College)	1,805	1,805	0	1,982
Total	4,853	4,853	0	3,624

24. As shown in **Table 1**, the total funding available for 2019/20 is £3.624m and this has been allocated to the schemes shown in **Table 2**. There are currently no proposed changes to these allocations.

25. The operational budget for LEPs nationally is determined by central government on an annual basis. The LEP's Core revenue budget for 2018/19 was **£662k**, comprising:

- i) DCLG income of £500k,
- ii) Local authority income of £150k, and
- iii) Other income of £12k (related to sponsorship and exhibition fees from WLEP Annual Conference).

26. Following WLEP Board approval at their meeting on 9 May 2019, the year end position indicates an under-spend against budget of **£19,034 (2.9%)**, which will be transferred into the WLEP reserve, which is held for unforeseen risks and issues and an element for potential redundancy costs.

27. In addition to the Core Budget detailed above, WLEP received £100k from BEIS in 2018/19 to assist with the additional resource required to implement the recommendations of the *Strengthened Local Enterprise Partnerships* report and to support development of the Local Industrial Strategy. This was received in

December 2018, and £28,485 was spent in 2018/19, meaning that the balance of £71,515 will be carried forward for use in 2019/20.

28. It is also anticipated that an additional £200k for the same purpose will be available to bid for, subject to final confirmation by BEIS, and this is expected to be spent in 2019/20. This additional funding is not considered to recurrent.

29. The WLEP also administers the Growing Places Fund (GPF), which was originally introduced to provide loans to accelerate the delivery of projects that would deliver economic outputs and outcomes. Loans were agreed at market rates based on the risk profile of the project with all capital being repaid over an agreed period. The original GPF made available to the LEP totalled £5,518,972 of which £418,515 was revenue. The amount currently held on the balance sheet is £2.427m, however this has been committed to individual projects with £496k of the Project Development Fund remaining. Details of income and expenditure are shown as part of the year end statement in **Appendix 1** with a split per project shown at **Appendix 2**.

30. A full income and expenditure account for revenue expenditure and the GPF is produced for the WLEP and is attached at **Appendix 1**. This was approved by WLEP Board on 9 May 2019. It is worth noting that only the additional income utilised in 2018/19 is shown in **Appendix 1**, with the £71,515 unspent having been treated as a receipt in advance and accrued as income for 2019/20.

WLEP Business Plan Priorities for 2019/20

31. April 2019 to March 2020 promises to be another exciting and productive year for WLEP. There are a number of key priorities which will be worked on and delivered over the next 12 months.

32. These priorities have been set out against the framework used by central Government to assess LEP's performance through the Annual Performance Review (APR) process:

- Strategy;
- Delivery; and
- Governance.

33. In terms of Strategy, the key objectives are:

- ***Develop a Local Industrial Strategy*** – WLEP will work in partnership with local stakeholders and central government to develop a county-wide Local Industrial Strategy to improve productivity and ensure inclusive growth across Worcestershire and our borders. This will require the development of a robust evidence base to underpin local priorities and to inform future investment / funding opportunities.
- ***Refresh our Strategic Economic Plan*** – the Strategic Economic Plan has been incredibly successful in leveraging investment into the county to deliver local priorities. During 2019/20, WLEP will take the opportunity to refresh our SEP and the project pipeline which will set out a vision for Worcestershire up to 2040 and beyond.

- **Launch Inward Investment website for Worcestershire** – WLEP will lead on the development and implementation of a web presence to showcase the inward investment opportunities of the county to raise the profile of Worcestershire nationally and internationally.

34. The key objectives for WLEP's Delivery in 2019/20 can broadly be summarised against three funded programmes:

- Local Growth Fund (LGF) programme;
- DCMS funded programme; and
- Growing Places funded programme.

35. There are some key infrastructure schemes receiving WLEP LGF investment, that will be delivered in 2019/20, as follows:

- **Kidderminster Rail Station** – A dramatic redevelopment of the existing rail station, including a new glass-fronted station twice the size of the existing building with new facilities including a cafe/shop, toilets, indoor seating and waiting areas will be completed in 2019/20. It will enable better transport links and connectivity for Kidderminster. Other funders for this scheme include Worcestershire County Council, Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP (GBSLEP) and Wyre Forest District Council.
- **A38 (Bromsgrove) Phase 1** – An initial phase of works, which is part of a broader project to improve the A38 corridor will be delivered in the first part of 2019/20 and will see a series of strategic road infrastructure improvements along the A38 corridor in Bromsgrove. This in turn will provide access to strategic housing and employment land enabling further economic growth in this area.
- **Pershore Northern Link improvements** – A road infrastructure project designed to address current and future congestion and will facilitate delivery of employment and housing land included within the South Worcestershire Development Plan.
- **Churchfields (Kidderminster)** – This scheme will deliver highway infrastructure improvements to relieve traffic congestion along A456 and A51 and provide access for proposed housing land.
- **Worcestershire Parkway Rail Station** – this is a key project for Worcestershire and has received WLEP investment. The scheme is due to complete in 2019/20 and has the potential to be a real game-changer for the county in terms of economic growth, sustainability and connectivity.

36. In addition to the infrastructure schemes, there is also a skills project and a business support project being delivered in 2019/20, as a result of WLEP LGF investment:

- **Duckworth Centre of Engineering (HoW College)** – Phase 1 of this 2-phased project is due to complete in time for the start of the academic year, September 2019. This project will ultimately deliver a multi-site Engineering Skills Centre specialising in the delivery of Automotive, Plumbing and Heating engineering skills. The new Centre will be split across a newly acquired site (Phase 1) and existing HoW College buildings on the Worcester city campus, which will require refurbishment and modification (Phase 2).
- **The Kiln (Worcester)** – This project will complete in the Summer 2019 and provide business incubator space in Worcester city centre and generate a

creative working space for business entrepreneurs to further develop the growing entrepreneurial and innovation eco-system across the county.

37. WLEP is also receiving investment from DCMS to deliver a Worcestershire 5G test-bed focusing on Industry 4.0 applications to improve productivity and enhance innovation. A key delivery objective for WLEP will be to continue the work on this project and report findings back to DCMS in 2019/20 with a view to advising on how to scale up deployment across the UK.

38. During 2018/19, WLEP utilised the expertise and knowledge gleaned from our own Worcestershire 5G test-bed to collaborate with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) in developing their successful bid to pitch for Urban Connected Communities (UCC) funding from DCMS. 2019/20 will see WLEP continue to share our learning to inform WMCA's project, informing regional use cases and wider deployment of 5G networks.

39. The final component of Delivery focus for 2019/20 centres around the Growing Places funded programme and in particular the development and agreement of a sustainability plan for BetaDen to ensure continuing support for the growing entrepreneurial eco-system across Worcestershire.

40. Finally, Governance will continue to be a focus for WLEP in 2019/20 as we monitor developments at a national level, following publication of the second NAO report and ensuring WLEP continues to operate as a business-led body with the highest standards of transparency and accountability in line with government's best practice recommendations.

WLEP Local Assurance Framework

41. In January 2019, Government updated the National Assurance Framework for Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCA) and LEPs. In response to this, WLEP updated their Local Assurance Framework (LAF) to ensure compliance with national best practice. This was published onto the WLEP website in May 2019 following FAR Committee review and WLEP Board approval.

42. The purpose of the Local Assurance Framework is to evidence that the LEP has in place the necessary systems and processes to manage delegated funding from Central Government effectively, whilst giving value for money. It is also about outlining the mechanisms in operation locally to ensure WLEP is an open and transparent organisation fully compliant with the recommendations and best practice set out in the *Strengthened Local Enterprise Partnerships* report from central government (July 2018).

43. In parallel, WLEP Executive Team also updated the governance pages on the WLEP website to make them more intuitive and accessible. The updated web pages, as well as the LAF, can be accessed from the following link:
<https://www.wlep.co.uk/governance/>

WLEP Governance and Transparency Arrangements

44. As per the Local Assurance Framework, WLEP are invited to attend Worcestershire County Council's Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board on an

annual basis, to update the Board on the operations of the LEP over the last 12 months and the programme of activity for the following year. The scrutiny panel will then decide whether to set up task and finish groups to undertake further scrutiny. This approach is consistent with national best practice identified by central government.

45. The WLEP structure includes a Finance Audit and Risk (FAR) Committee, which is a formal standing sub-committee of the WLEP Board. It is responsible for the monitoring, audit and risk management functions of the LEP and ensuring compliance with any regulatory frameworks relating to funding or partnership working including the Memorandum of Understanding with the Accountable Body.

46. The FAR Committee meets on a quarterly basis and in 2018/19 it commissioned an Internal Audit of WLEP's Local Assurance Framework.

47. The audit assessed the extent to which the WLEP governance structures as designed and documented in the revised WLEP Assurance Framework (Feb 2018) met the LEP National Assurance Framework 2016 (informed by the LEP governance and transparency best practice guidance 2018). It also examined on a sample basis the application of the framework in practice.

48. The final audit report concluded that '*Overall, the opinion is that controls provide **Substantial** assurance that risks are being managed.*' However, there were two recommendations provided in the final audit report:

- WLEP management should implement a process to ensure that the publication of non-confidential agendas, papers and minutes on the WLEP website is not overlooked. For clarity, this recommendation relates to LEP Quad and Business Board meetings as WLEP Board meetings have consistently been published on our website in compliance with National and Local Assurance Frameworks; and
- the purpose and operation of the WLEP Business Board should be reviewed and where necessary amended. The Assurance Framework should be updated to reflect any agreed changes.

49. The WLEP Executive Team are already addressing both of these recommendations with mitigating actions now in place to address the former, and plans in development, as part of wider LEP Review implementation actions to address the latter. Proposals to address the Business Board will be submitted to FAR Committee in September 2019.

50. In March 2019, Stephen Jones, Director of Cities and Local Growth Unit wrote to all LEPs to record the outcome of their Annual Performance Review meeting. The results for WLEP were very positive with WLEP receiving 'Good' judgements across all three categories of Strategy, Delivery and Governance. The letter is provided at Appendix 3. Despite this positive outcome, WLEP is not complacent and is committed to continuous improvement and will seek to learn from best practice across the LEP Network to maintain and improve on this position during 2019/20.

Next Steps

51. WLEP welcomes the opportunity to present to the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board of the Accountable Body and is proud to outline the positive impact that WLEP and the wider partnership is having on the county's economic development.

52. WLEP trusts that the OSPB members will recognise the progress made to date and the ambitious plans to further enhance the prosperity of Worcestershire as it embarks on the development of a Local Industrial Strategy and refresh of the county's Strategic Economic Plan during 2019/20, working with partners, local stakeholders and central government.

Purpose of the Meeting

53. The Board is asked to:

- (a) Review and note the progress made by WLEP in 2018/19 to implement the recommendations of the LEP Review – *Strengthened Local Enterprise Partnerships*;
- (b) Review and note the progress made by WLEP in 2018/19 to deliver against the objectives of the Strategic Economic Plan;
- (c) Note the planned programme of activity for 2019/20;
- (d) Note the 2018/19 internal audit final report findings and management response; and
- (e) Note the development and publication of the revised WLEP Assurance Framework, in compliance with national best practice

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 - WLEP Financial Accounts Statement for 2018/19

Appendix 2 - Growing Places Fund

Appendix 3 - Outcome of Annual Performance Review (APR) letter from Stephen Jones, Director of Cities and Local Growth Unit

Specific Contact Points

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Head of Legal and Democratic Services) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

- WLEP Strategic Economic Plan: <http://www.wlep.co.uk/assets/WLEP-Final-SEP-310314-V-1-1.pdf>
- WLEP SEP Summary document: <http://www.wlep.co.uk/assets/SEP-Summary-Document-Amended-Version-for-Web.pdf>
- WLEP Annual Reports: <http://www.wlep.co.uk/resources/document-library/>

- Government's Industrial Strategy: Building a Britain Fit for the Future: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/industrial-strategy-building-a-britain-fit-for-the-future>
- Strengthened Local Enterprise Partnerships: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/728058/Strengthened_Local_Enterprise_Partnerships.pdf
- WLEP Assurance Framework: <https://www.wlep.co.uk/governance/wlep-local-assurance-framework/>
- Agenda and Minutes of OSPB on 23 May 2018 – available [here](#)

[All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website here.](#)