Driving Worcestershire Forward

Annual Report 2012-2013

Worcestershire
Local Enterprise Partnership

Worcestershire
Local Enterprise Partnership

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Letter from Government Minister

We know that Britain's economy needs to focus on its strengths if it is to compete and thrive. At the local level, it is businesses, councils and stakeholders who best understand local strengths and priorities. This is why the role of the Local Enterprise Partnerships is crucial, and why the Government is devolving real economic powers, after years of Whitehall centralisation.

Many LEPs, including the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership, are keen to adopt the Government's industrial strategy approach: working in partnership with businesses, skills providers and Government to secure growth.

As this report demonstrates, Worcestershire businesses and local authorities are already working closely together, with a determined focus on future growth, and building on Worcestershire's success. There will be many opportunities in the coming year, and I hope to see the Worcestershire LEP leading the way in seizing them, helping businesses to expand and creating jobs for the economy in Worcestershire and beyond.

Michael Fallon

The Rt Hon Michael Fallon MP

Minister of State for
Business and Enterprise

Foreword

Last year I stated that in my belief Worcestershire has far greater economic and wellbeing potential than it has ever exploited or shown. The last twelve months have done much to further confirm that belief. The county is a wonderful, yet hidden, gem which fails to shine in the way it could and should.

Yet when you compare the employment rates and the county's economic performance, you could conclude that Worcestershire's economy is doing reasonably well. Employment totals across Worcestershire have increased and unemployment rates remain below regional and national averages. However, they still lag behind the figures for counties such as Warwickshire, Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire and average wage levels are the third lowest in the country.

The gross value added (GVA) level for Worcestershire has increased from our 2009 benchmark of £8,457m by 8.2% to a level of £9,159 by 2011. The LEP claim no credit for that but we will be keen to know the statistics for 2012 and 2013 when published in due course.

What is very evident across the county is a steady and encouraging upturn in construction activity, particularly in much needed private and affordable housing. Alongside this we have together with our local authority partners made great strides in bringing forward a number of key strategic employment sites in attractive and accessible locations and which we are now ready to market aggressively, targeted at both indigenous company growth and new inward investment.

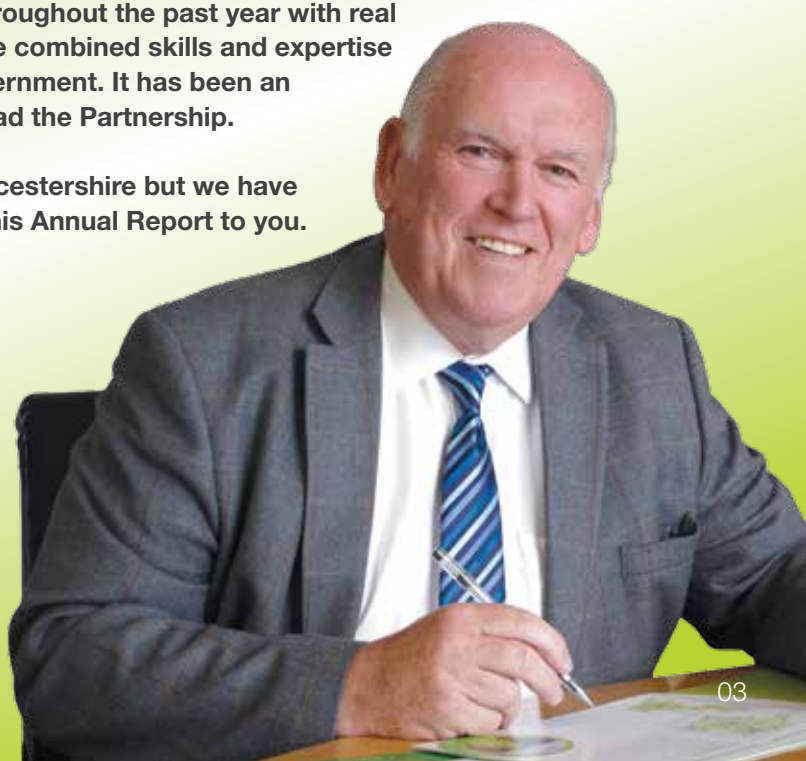
However there is understandably a culture of contentment in many parts of Worcestershire – after all it really is a great place to live with a wonderful environment, great history and heritage and connections to the national road and rail networks that most other counties would die for. But we must not allow such a reaction to become a culture of complacency for things can never stand still – we have to use the untapped potential of Worcestershire to match if not overtake the levels of other comparative counties and to boost our economy and bring more jobs, particularly for our younger people.

You will be aware that Government has taken on board many of the recommendations of the Lord Heseltine report 'No Stone Unturned' and currently the WLEP team is fully engaged in negotiations for Worcestershire to receive its full share of funding from Europe and from the 'single pot', as it is known. Last year's business plan has given us a solid base for our strategy and proposals and we are working with our many partners to define and refine the key priorities and areas for funding need. What is clear however is that our proposals to Government will need to be dynamic, innovative and based on solid evidence if we are to attract support at the levels that Worcestershire will need.

This is a demanding task and I want to thank our Executive Director, Gary Woodman, and his team together with our local government and other partners for the support they have shown towards the Worcestershire LEP not only in this exercise but in many other ways throughout the year. The whole WLEP process has matured and grown enormously throughout the past year with real strength resulting from the combined skills and expertise of business and local government. It has been an honour and pleasure to lead the Partnership.

We are well placed in Worcestershire but we have much to do. I commend this Annual Report to you.

Peter E Pawsey
CEng FICE FCIHT FCMI
Executive Chair



Introduction from Gary Woodman, Executive Director

Since the launch of our Business Plan at last year's Annual Conference, Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership has been concentrating on delivery.

Our aim was – and still is – to create the right economic environment in the county to inspire businesses, encourage investment and to create lasting and sustainable employment in Worcestershire by 2017 and beyond. The Business Plan outlined four strategic objectives and set specific measures against which our efforts would be assessed. We also highlighted the five key sectors that would be the focus for our support.

Within the pages of this Annual Report, we have highlighted our progress towards the achievement of these goals. Much has been done and we are proud of the progress that has been made, but there is plenty still to do. The Heseltine review, 'No Stone Unturned', and the Chancellor's response in the spring of 2013 set the stage for a new phase in all 39 LEPs' development. This reflects the Government's desire to decentralise responsibility to the LEPs to maximise economic growth and to create the jobs that will drive the future prosperity of their regions.

In Worcestershire we are putting together our Growth Plan for submission to the Government by the spring of 2014. This Growth Plan will determine the level of aspiration, our priorities and focus for economic growth and jobs, with funds to be secured locally from both public and private sectors, European funds and the 'Single Pot' Growth Fund.

Our 2012 Business Plan has provided a useful basis for this work. However, we are looking more closely at developing relationships with partners. These include our neighbouring LEPs and also those networks in Worcestershire that have a vital role to play in helping realise our vision, particularly the local nature partnership, voluntary and community sectors and rural partners. There is no doubt that the Government is committed to the LEPs and is convinced that they are at the heart of Britain's economic recovery strategy.

As we look to the future, we are sure that even more responsibility will come our way. Our aim is to be ready to face that challenge and to ensure that Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership does all that it can to get the best deal possible for Worcestershire.

Gary Woodman
Executive Director

Our Strategic Objectives

1: National Profile and Promotion

Maximising the county's exposure

Utilising networks and relationships

Increasing Worcestershire's presence and relevance in decision making processes

2: Access to Finance

Harnessing the expertise and knowledge of the professional sector

Providing one delivery model of various finance options to local business

3: Employment and Skills

Skills and workforce planning

Strengthening the relationship between education and business

Increasing employability

4: Planning, Development and Infrastructure

Creating a business friendly planning system

Delivery of key investment sites for business expansion

Working with partners to advocate for improved infrastructure, including broadband, utilities and transport

Our key sectors:

- Manufacturing
- Cyber Security and Defence
- Tourism
- Horticulture and Food Production
- Environmental Technology

Measures of success:

- By 2015 increase by 5% employment levels in Worcestershire from a base in April 2012.
- By 2017 account for £750 m worth of private sector investment in Worcestershire businesses from a base in April 2012.
- Grow the Worcestershire economy by the measure of Gross Value Added which in 2009 was £8,457 m

Progress against targets

The Worcestershire LEP's vision is to create the right economic environment to inspire businesses, encourage investment and create lasting and sustainable employment in Worcestershire by 2017 and beyond. But how do we know when we've achieved this?

In an effort to answer this question, in last year's Business Plan the LEP identified three key measures of success:

- To increase employment in Worcestershire by 5% by 2015;
- To account for £750 million worth of private sector investment in Worcestershire businesses by 2017;
- To grow the Worcestershire economy by the measure of Gross Value Added (GVA), which in 2009 was £8,457 million.

Throughout the past year, the LEP has been working with its partners towards the achievement of these goals and has already seen significant progress.

For example, Worcestershire's employment rate has risen consistently since 2010 and currently stands at 75.5% (an increase of 2.5% since 2010). This compares to 70.9% for the UK; and 68.4% for the West Midlands overall. Importantly, the figures are 77.9% for Oxfordshire, 75.5% for Warwickshire and 77.0% for Gloucestershire.

We cannot afford to be complacent. Economic recovery is still fragile and there are pockets of high unemployment in our region. We are also aware from a recent survey commissioned by the LEP in the Manufacturing sector, that the county has skills shortages in some areas, particularly precision engineering and machine operation roles.

Although we have suffered some economic setbacks in the past year, we have welcomed major investment to our county from both private and public funds.

We were successful in our support for a number of bids to the Regional Growth Fund, for example a notable success for high-tech firm Malvern Instruments to invest in a new Research and Development team and manufacturing facilities. This will allow the firm to target the nano materials and bioscience markets, creating new jobs and safeguarding existing at their Enigma Business Park site in Malvern. The new jobs will be highly technical, providing opportunities for PhD and graduate engineers and scientists from across the UK. Investment will also be made in the firm's apprenticeship programme and in their work with local schools.

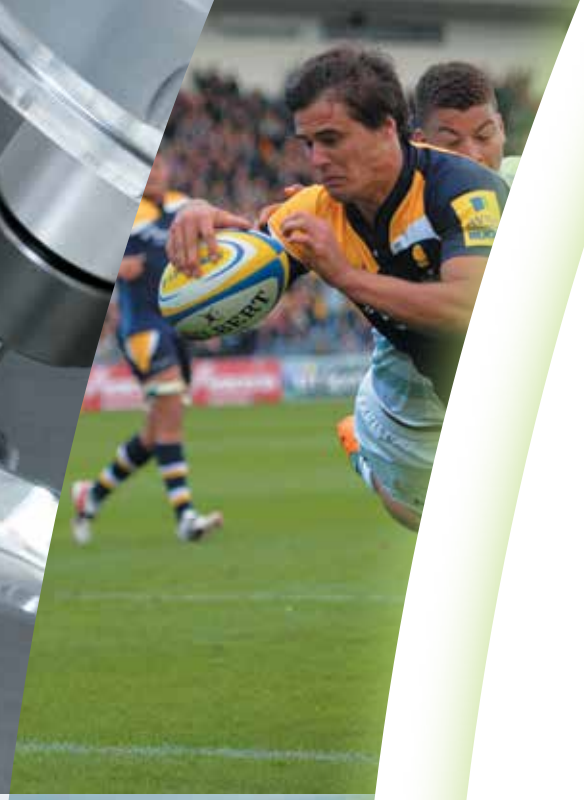
We welcomed announcements from the Sanctuary Group, Hansteen Holdings and Wellbeck Land amongst others confirming their plans to develop or renovate properties in Worcestershire and we were pleased to hear about major private sector investments in the Washford Industrial Estate in Redditch. News that Western Power Distribution would be investing £8 million in improving their supply reliability can only be good news for Worcestershire, as is the County Council's £8 million commitment alongside a further £3.35 million from Government and £8.9 million from BT to rolling out high-speed broadband to 90% of Worcestershire's homes and businesses by 2016.

In terms of our commitment to grow Worcestershire's economy by the measure of Gross Value Added, we are progressing well. Latest figures (in 2011) show Worcestershire's GVA at £9,159 million, an increase of 8.2% on our 2009 benchmark of £8,457 million.

As we look forward to the forthcoming 12 months, we remain committed to our vision and will continue to monitor progress against targets. We are determined to deliver results for Worcestershire and will work closely with local authority and business partners to achieve our goals.

Brintons Carpets, Kidderminster

Image courtesy of St. Pancras Renaissance Hotel, London



Strategic Objective 1 – National Profile & Promotion

In last year's Business Plan, raising Worcestershire's profile as the ideal place in which to invest, work, live and play was identified as the LEP's top priority.

We planned to focus particularly on three core areas: 'Showcase', 'Promote' and 'Position' Worcestershire. Particular projects were identified under each of these headings alongside targets and timelines and those responsible for achieving the objectives.

Showcase Worcestershire
We have been pleased to host and support high profile visitors to the county, including the Business Secretary, Vince Cable (April 2012) and the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles (June 2012). The past year has also seen delegations from Russia, China and the EU together with other Government Ministers.

Our annual conferences have provided ideal opportunities not only to give an update on LEP activity, but also to showcase the county and its achievements as a whole. Around 300 delegates attended each of these events, including senior representatives from local and national government, Worcestershire based businesses, social enterprises and not for profit organisations.

We welcomed Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce's Business Expo, held in March 2013 at the Three Counties Showground. The event attracted close to 1,000 visitors and was an ideal opportunity to showcase the counties' businesses. We were also pleased to sponsor the inaugural Festival of Innovation in Malvern in November 2012 and now look forward to this year's event.

We continue to explore opportunities to raise the profile of Worcestershire at investment events and are working closely with UKTI to develop the Worcestershire 'proposition', with a particular focus on our five key market sectors.

Promote Worcestershire
Over the past year, the LEP has worked hard to develop relationships with key local businesses. Our aim is to encourage them to sing the praises of Worcestershire – particularly to those who are currently located outside of the county and are part of their supply chain.

We have also developed strong relationships with our local MPs and MEPs, all of whom are proactively selling Worcestershire's benefits.

We have established a National Profile and Promotion Strategy Group whose membership includes leaders from major Worcestershire businesses – including BBC Hereford & Worcester, Worcester News, Worcester Warriors, Three Counties Showground and West Midlands Safari Park – together with Worcestershire County Council's Chief Executive and other representatives from the not for profit sector.

A film aimed at promoting Worcestershire as the best county in which to invest, work, live and play is being produced as well as an accompanying brochure. These tools and our on-going relationship with UKTI will form the basis of the 'Worcestershire proposition' for inward investment.

In terms of tourism, we pledged to work with Destination Worcestershire and our local authorities to develop an integrated tourism strategy with the objective of increasing the value of the industry to the county. To inform this process, the LEP commissioned research which benchmarked the value and nature of the tourism market in the county.

Meanwhile, we are undertaking a concerted and targeted communications campaign with the aim of raising Worcestershire's profile in the media – with particular emphasis on its five key industry sectors and their connection with the wider business community. This has resulted in Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership developing a number of industry 'case studies' and achieving wide coverage in the media, including articles on BBC Regional TV and Radio and in Forbes Magazine in Indonesia.

Position Worcestershire
Critical to our success in being able to position Worcestershire as the ideal location for business investment is an understanding of what Worcestershire stands for. What are the defining features of the Worcestershire 'brand'?

The LEP Board and Executive Team have invested a significant amount of time over the past 12 months in answering this question. Board 'Away Days' and discussions with external experts have concluded that Worcestershire's USP is its *combination* of excellent location, good infrastructure, and its industry and business credentials alongside historical and cultural significance and an exquisite natural environment.

Our job now is to sell that message to the outside world. With this in mind, we have recently commissioned an agency to work with us to develop an overarching 'Worcestershire brand'. This is targeted to be launched by the beginning of 2014 and will give an overall identity for Worcestershire whilst complementing the many other corporate images that numerous organisations have developed over many years across the county.

Strategic Objective 2 – Access to Finance

Research undertaken by Worcestershire's business community in November 2011 found that access to finance and the lack of availability of finance remain among the top barriers to business growth.

As lending continues to be squeezed and grant funds are further affected by public sector spending cuts, businesses need to explore alternative routes to finance.

It was for these reasons that 'Access to Finance' was identified as one of Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership's key strategic priorities and a dedicated strategy group was established.

The Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership Business Plan focused activity on two key Access to Finance areas: Harnessing the expertise and knowledge of the professional sector and looking at one delivery model for various finance options to local businesses.

Harnessing expertise and knowledge
Key to being able to access finance is a knowledge of the marketplace and an understanding of who to turn to for help.

The Access to Finance strategy group has developed a close relationship with a broad network of professionals in the finance sector. Through this network they have developed a strong understanding of local capabilities and resources that will benefit particularly those in Worcestershire's SME sector.

The launch of the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership's Access to Finance portal has been a major achievement for the group this year.

Going forward, the group will build on this work particularly through the organisation of regular finance and funding focused events open to the local business community.

One delivery model
In the summer of 2013 we were pleased to launch a new 'Access to Finance' portal:
http://accesstofinance.wlep.co.uk

Based on the thorough information gathering exercise undertaken by the Access to Finance strategy group, the portal provides a conduit for Worcestershire businesses to access a wide range of financial advice, information and support.

As well as details of a network of specialist services, including banks, venture capitalists, solicitors, accountants and angel investors, the site contains an on-line library of information and downloadable fact sheets on various aspects of finance, including advice on the types of finance available to businesses.

There is also a facility for visitors to submit their own questions if they can't find the answer they're looking for on the site.

The portal will continue to develop and grow over the forthcoming months and years, with new information and advice being uploaded all the time.

Strategic Objective 3 – Employment and Skills

In last year's Business Plan, there was a commitment by the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership and the Worcestershire Employment and Skills Board to work together to strengthen skills provision in the county in order to meet current and future private sector needs.

Joint priorities were identified and we are pleased to report significant increases in the number of apprenticeships being undertaken in the county, especially at level 3 and 4 and in engineering. Figures for 2012 at 5,700 places created were more than twice those for 2011.

Advances have also been made in other aspects of workforce skills development relating to Worcestershire's important cyber security sector. For example, we were particularly encouraged by a recent decision to house a national E-skills training centre at Malvern Hills Technology Park.

In building the relationship between schools and businesses, a major achievement has been the sign-up of Worcestershire's high schools to an Agreement to engage more closely with businesses in the county, and a web portal has been developed to match employers' needs with opportunities for work experience. In autumn 2013, this will be piloted in six Worcestershire schools with the plan to roll-out the scheme to all the county's state high schools at the beginning of 2014.

Youth unemployment is a major issue both nationally and locally. With this in mind, in last year's Business Plan the LEP stressed its commitment to improving the employment prospects of young people. Through the Employment and Skills Board a number of initiatives have been developed and in August 2013 we were delighted to see that youth unemployment in the county had decreased by 2.5% since May 2011.

In mid-2013 we commissioned a survey into Worcestershire's manufacturing base. At 14% Worcestershire has the 5th highest proportion of its working age population engaged in manufacturing in a table of all 39 LEPs. It is important therefore that we have a deep understanding of this sector and the results of the survey will help to inform the LEP's future strategy for manufacturing across the county.

The LEP is also working on other initiatives to ensure that employers can access the skills sets they need in the county. In particular, we are working closely with the Armed Forces to encourage ex-Service personnel to relocate to Worcestershire, while at the same time working to raise awareness amongst businesses of the rich seam of skills potentially available to them from this source.

Strategic Objective 4 - Planning, Development and Infrastructure

Worcestershire's growth and prosperity depend to a large extent on the existence of sound infrastructure and the provision of attractive sites for potential investors.

Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership has identified Planning, Development and Infrastructure as its fourth key strategic objective and committed itself to working closely with the Place Shaping Group of the Worcestershire Partnership.

One of our early aims was to ensure a business friendly planning system for the county that would contribute to Worcestershire being 'Open for Business'. At last year's Annual Conference we were pleased to launch our Worcestershire 'Planning and Development Charter' that aims to streamline the planning process and encourage a culture which supports future prosperity.

We have also worked closely with Worcester Regulatory Services to develop a separate 'Regulatory and Business Partnership Charter' that was launched in early 2013. The Charter, agreed by local authorities, national regulators and the business community, commits these partners to working together to make the regulatory process more transparent and understandable for businesses.

Together with our partners we have identified four key 'Gamechanger' sites. These are located in different parts of the county - Redditch, Kidderminster, Malvern and Worcester - and are of great strategic importance for the future prosperity of the county. We are developing a strategy to align local and private sector funds and other opportunities to bring these sites forward to market more quickly. This will include lobbying for Government investment either from the European Funds or 'Single Pot' funding.

We have bid for and been successful in achieving 'Pinch Point' funding from Government to alleviate various traffic congestion black spots. These include the major reconstruction of M5 Junction 4, improvement works to M5 Junction 9 and the adjacent A46 trunk road, and through County Highways for the completion of Hoobrook link road in Kidderminster. In the recent Spending Review, the Financial Secretary also announced a commitment to develop a 'Managed Motorway' system on M5 between Junction 4a of the M5 (M42 at Bromsgrove) and J6 (Sixways).

Over the past year, the LEP has awarded loans from the Growing Places Funds to support major improvements at the Worcestershire County Cricket Club and the first phase of an Enterprise Park on the site of the British Sugar Factory in Kidderminster. Applications for the second round of Growing Places funding are currently being progressed through the due diligence process.

Longer term, we continue to support the development of new rail stations at Bromsgrove and at Worcestershire Parkway near Norton and M5 Junction 7. These developments, once completed, will not only provide faster, more direct links to Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff and London but also direct connections to the planned HS2 and to Birmingham International Airport.

Finally, the LEP has supported the call for broadband improvements in the county through the involvement of two members of its Business Board on the Broadband project group. Roll out will begin in spring 2014.

WLEP Board Members

Business Representatives:
(left to right, top to bottom):

Peter Pawsey (Chair)
Chairman, Robert West Consulting Engineers
Non Executive Director, Midland Heart

Ed Webb
Chairman, Webbs Garden Centres Ltd
Non Executive Director, Bransford Webbs Plants Company
(Resigned September 2013)

Carl Arntzen
Managing Director, Worcester Bosch Group

Alan White
Chief Executive, Malvern Hills Science Park

Dean Attwell (Vice Chair)
Managing Director, Oakland International

Higher & Further Education Representative:

John Callaghan
Principal, North East Worcestershire College

Local Authority Representatives:

Simon Geraghty (Vice Chair)
Leader, Worcestershire County Council

David Hughes
Leader, Malvern Hills District Council

John Campion
Leader, Wyre Forest District Council

WLEP Business Board Members

Dean Attwell (Chair) (Oakland International)
Paul Alekna (e-Response Recruitment) elected November 2012
Carl Arntzen (Worcester Bosch)
Mike Ashton (Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce)
Jacqui Bayliss (Harris Lamb Property) elected November 2012
Steve Borwell-Fox (Borwell Limited) elected November 2012
Ray Brookes (Community Housing)
Marcus Burton (Mazak)
Francis Christie (Francis Christie Ltd)
Margaret Gray (Midwest Rural Enterprise Community Interest Company)
Robbie Hazlehurst (Chrysalis Performance Ltd)
Roy Irish (Financial Partnership & Support Ltd) elected September 2013
Tony King (Sanctuary Housing)
Mark Martin (One Creative Environments)
Kate Moss (University of Worcester) elected September 2013
Richard Quallington (Community First)
Steve Speller (Speller Metcalfe) elected November 2012
Stephen Taylor (Taylor Property Developments)
Ed Webb (Webbs Garden Centres Ltd)
Alan White (Malvern Hills Science Park)
Rebecca Widdowson (Hallmark Hulme) elected November 2012
Ken Wigfield (Federation of Small Businesses)

WLEP Strategic Objective Sub-group Chairs

National Profile & Promotion:
Kate Moss (University of Worcester)

Access to Finance:
Roy Irish (Financial Partnership & Support Ltd)

Employment & Skills:
Carl Arntzen (Worcester Bosch)

Planning, Development & Infrastructure:
Jacqui Bayliss (Harris Lamb Property)

Report of the Finance, Audit, Risk & Appointments Committee

The Finance, Audit, Risk and Appointments (FAR&A) Committee is a formal standing sub-committee of the Worcestershire LEP Board. The Committee has a balanced membership of public and private sector members. It is Chaired by Francis Christie. Francis was the Acting Chairman for the LEP and led the establishment of the LEP in 2010-11. He has continued to serve as a member of the LEP Business Board. There are three other members of the FAR&A Committee: Councillor John Campion, who is on the LEP Board; Tony King, Group Director, Sanctuary Housing Association and Stuart Laverick, Principal and Chief Executive of Worcester College of Technology.

The Committee is responsible for promoting 'good governance' by providing oversight of the financial monitoring, audit and risk management functions of the LEP. It should also agree all non-executive appointments and support the Board, where possible, in monitoring performance and risks.

The Committee was established in February 2013. It depends on the accounting resources of Worcestershire County Council who manage the allocation of funds and are the nominated 'accountable body' for the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills. This is working effectively, as evidenced by receipt of funds and the allocation of loans by the 'Growing Places Fund'.

The FAR&A Committee has reviewed the actual expenditure against the plans, for last year, and approved the statement of accounts. It has also reviewed the financial plan for this year.

One of the first achievements of the Committee has been to establish a 'Register of Interests' for LEP Board members, which is collated by the LEP Executive Director. This Register of Interests is open for inspection by the public on making a written request to the LEP office.

Although there is no requirement to comply, the FAR&A Committee wishes to identify and develop 'best practice', in line with audit committees in the public and private sector. This will continue as it develops appropriate policies to guide 'good governance' in the LEP. Further work is underway in the Committee to put in place appropriate processes for reviewing complaints and to develop a process for identifying and reviewing significant risks faced by the LEP.

LEP Year End 31st March 2013: Income and Expenditure Account

	Budget £	Actual £	Variation £
Income:			
Capacity Fund Round 1[1]	5,750	5,750	-
Capacity Fund Round 2	25,600	25,600	-
Start up Funding[1]	10,437	10,437	-
Core Funding[2]	-	125,000	125,000
Transport Income[3]	-	131,579	131,579
Local Govt Contribution[4]	188,332	188,332	-
Other Income	-	1,838	1,838
Total Income	**230,119**	**488,536**	**258,417**

	Budget £	Actual £	Balance c/f £
Expenditure:			
Brought Forward	10,436	10,436	-
Staffing	133,183	128,027	5,156
External Consultancy Support[5]	25,000	20,200	4,800
Services and Supplies	15,000	14,221	779
Marketing / Promotions	15,000	18,905	(3,905)
Exhibitions and Events	10,000	16,314	(6,314)
Transport Expenditure[3]	-	-	-
Employment and Skills Work	16,000	16,101	(101)
Training	500	200	300
Travel and Subsistence	5,000	3,990	1,010
Total Expenditure	**230,119**	**228,394**	**1,725**

Excess of income over expenditure for the year:		**260,142**

	Budget £	Committed £	Balance available £
Capital:			
Growing Places Fund[6]	5,518,972	2,160,013	3,358,959

Notes

[1]Final quarter funding

[2]From Government (6 months) carried forward

[3]DfT income allocated March 2013

[4]£150,000 plus Governance Review contributions

[5]Includes Governance Review

[6]Further allocations in current year

Worcestershire - A central location

Contact

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