



Minutes CWLEP SME Supergroup meeting 9th May 2018

09.30-11.30am at NFU HQ, Stoneleigh Park, Kenilworth CV8 2TZ

Attendees

Linsey Luke (Chair)

Dave Hope

Graham Simpson

Luke Ryder

Dave Ayton-Hill

Adrian Hart

Janette Pallas

Paul Rice

Richard Marchington

Rachel Baconnet

Steph Kerr

Bill Blincoe

Apologies received from

Craig Humphrey

Phil Peak

Andy Williams

Sean Farnell

Roger Scott

Sarah Windrum

Matt Epps

<u>1. WELCOME</u>	
<p>Minutes were agreed.</p> <p>Luke Ryder, Bill Blincoe, Adrian Hart and Rachel Baconnet were introduced as visitors. The NFU Mutual were thanked for the invitation to host the meeting.</p>	
<u>2. MATTERS ARISING AND ACTION LIST</u>	
<p>Portal update – Demo at next meeting</p> <p>Cybersecurity event – Feedback was positive, 40 businesses attended. Event was densely packed with speakers but they presented different topics so a good initial overview. Further in-depth events are planned, businesses interested in case studies, HR & Management to prevent and manage cyber fraud. Growth Hub plans to do further work with Cybersecurity partnership.</p>	<p>AP: CH to give demo of portal at next meeting</p>
<u>3. RURAL SECTOR – SUPPORT DISCUSSION</u>	
<p>Luke Ryder gave an Introduction of NFU Trade Association, including the NFU Mutual and NFU. NFU is internationally recognised organisation. There is uncertainty over agricultural policy and regulations post-Brexit agricultural policy. Agricultural sector is used to receiving support and grant schemes. The trend for farms is to step away from food production as the primary source but diversify into shops and renting out space as renovated office space. However, planning constrains farmers ability to grow.</p> <p><u>Access to Finance & Support</u></p> <p>Access to support and grant funding is problematic for farmers due to constraints of their Day-to-day jobs.</p> <p>LEADER funding is difficult to access and process through. EOI phase is easy to come through but full application is arduous. 4k-10000, worth the effort, anything lower than that isn't. Worcs seem to be spending more money than Warks.</p> <p>EAFRD also very complicated process. Proactive support through WCC makes a difference. However, everyone is applying for same thing in the same windows. Devolved funding from DEFRA -> More flexible and accessible. Quality of applications with extra support is better.</p> <p>Perception that farmers think of themselves as different to other types of businesses and that what the LEP and FSB are trying to achieve doesn't apply to them. NFU has 1,500 -2,000 members in Warwickshire and Worcs.</p> <p>LEP needs to be aware of Health & Harmony consultation – there will be devolution of grant funding on regional level. Devolved grant funding and grant administration.</p>	

<p>Current funding streams are restricted - successor Brexit funds: ESIF committee will not start from Blank paper. ERDF sectors like retail and agriculture are currently excluded – responding to SME base and Growth dynamic.</p> <p><u>Rural Broadband/ Connectivity</u> Farmers believe that mobile service worsened in recent years. Coventry, Warwickshire and Solihull, Wave 2 areas, secured £5.7m on broadband, won't save area on its own. Government is rolling out Gigabit vouchers across C&W, supporting business to access gigabit broadband.</p> <p>6,500 farmers surveyed around connectivity – less than 9% have access to superfast broadband. → National survey in England.</p> <p><u>Workforce</u> Key-lobbying asks around labour – 17% drop in seasonal labour last year. Labour availability is a historic issue. Struggle exacerbated by exchange rates – Growers relying on same families coming back year on year. Accessing government agencies. Increase of 30% payrates to weigh off automation.</p> <p>Automation has not yet widely affected farm labour due to costs. Drones cannot practically support a “hands-off hectare” due to legal restrictions and autonomous tractors are high-cost and need to be programmed.</p> <p>Potential opportunities for knowledge transfers with Universities. E.g. University of Warwick – crop science – Professors wanting access to farmers.</p> <p>Active companies in the region – Midlands Connected Autonomous vehicles – make connections to farmers – looking for a test base- 5G testbed to be put up to connect autonomous vehicles on the roads- need to connect these. Uncertainty that less labour brings – agriculture talking about lengthy transitions into domestic agricultural policy. 3-7 years to adopt new phase. Similar rules to now until 2024.</p> <p>How can perception of for young people of working in the agricultural sector be changed? Students? Pupils to encourage them to get involved?</p>	<p>AP: LR – To help arrange a future meeting at farm</p>
<p><u>4. PLANNING & HOUSING BUSINESS GROUP</u></p>	
<p>Bill Blincoe introduced the priorities of the Planning & Housing Business Group which is chaired by Cllr Peter Butlin, Board lead is Martin Yardley. This is one of the LEP's long established committees, originally planning and employment group, and still has a focus on employment land – last meeting was March – coming up in May. Make-up of the group is intended to be 50% Private, 50% public, local authorities and planners.</p> <p><u>Regular items</u> - Progress of local authorities' development plans - WMCA agenda – Beneficial to access to government and regional funding pots.</p>	

<p>- Employment land supply National planning policy framework that is being radically reformed – heavily focused on housing. Delivery in C&W is good against targets in the South of Warwickshire. Combined Authority is focused on speeding up delivery of projects in the pipeline</p> <p>Discussions around opening group to public scrutiny. Region has experienced high inflation in rent and land prices. High level of take-up for employment space in the region. 70-80 hectares of land take up in C&W, fuelled by distribution (not efficient consumer of land). Land allocation process is focused on investors and land owners – affordability problem. C&W authorities working on joint monitoring and joint support. Committee looking at that, making recommendations to LEP board. Property issues in relation to small businesses. Chamber and FSB have made representations. Shared platform with Dave Penn at Rugby local plan assembly. Group is making recommendations to Board and are involved in pulling together market signals and intelligence report.</p> <p>Trying to earmark specific allocations of land for employment, also looking for better protection of existing employment areas – looking for more consistency. Shortage of major inward investment opportunities. We’re running out of big sites. Have smaller sites in supply. Big users – e.g. overseas investor, would require more land – future needs of inward investment site. Joint piece of work with Black Country, Bham, and Staffs. Affordable and high-quality workspace is required. Where do those go moving away from the shed. BB: Creating a culture of joint planning between C&W – to encourage a statutory plan in Coventry & Warwickshire – to overcome sovereignty – next big challenge.</p>	<p>AP: Sarah to send around agenda of PHBG</p> <p>AP: If anyone interested in feeding into employment land research for group – Planning group keen to set up stakeholder consultations.</p>
<p><u>5. TRANSPORT & INFRASTRUCTURE BUSINESS GROUP</u></p>	
<p>Adrian Hart introduced priorities of the Transport & Infrastructure Group which meets every two months. This is chaired by Monica Fogarty, Board lead is Paul Kehoe. Reps are from a range of public & Private sector partners, such as Transport for England, Network rail, Chiltern Railways, Bus operator, Transport Consultancy, etc. Issues play a key role in SEP. Work on Rail priorities – CWLEP Rail Priorities document. Responses to consultations. Coming forward presentation on A46 improvements. Workplan for group reviewed regularly.</p> <p>Current priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic infrastructure projects (road/rail/air) – Investment strategy. - Local infrastructure pipeline – supporting local plans – increasing focus on “last mile” – to get into town centres, employment centres, industrial estates – full journey improvement – complement what big network agencies do - Network resilience 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work programmes around Midlands Connect – well developed strategy, put in place in March 2017. Planning for future investment. Making sure midlands is competing. - Technology and innovation. Business group looking to understand what it can contribute towards that. - Ongoing work, responding to government consultations. - Looking for feedback on how work can do better around Broadband. <p>Group raised query around how greater relationships can be formed around town centres. District Council unsuccessful of having a county council support around questions of parking issues and emissions.</p> <p>WCC working with District boroughs on air quality, Issues – caused by environment you got – e.g. rail stations – focus areas. Schemes are around that area to improve air quality. Technology over time will help improve emissions.</p>	<p>AP: AH and SK to liaise on who can be contacted regarding planning and parking issues.</p>
<p><u>6. WARWICKSHIRE TOWN CENTRE PROGRAMMES</u></p>	
<p>Rachel Baconnet – Town Centres and Tourism of County Council introduced the Town Centre programmes, which WCC has invested in. Piloted BID 3-4 years ago – new strategy. Town Centre Forum, to come together quarterly to develop best practice – representation of smaller market towns in Warwickshire</p> <p>Warwickshire Towns Network Helping towns support each other. Master planning and visioning work e.g. Transforming Nuneaton – biggest priority for infrastructure/regeneration project. Place making and Infrastructure</p> <p>Digital Highstreet strand Supplying businesses with tracking monitor for footfall situation – focus of last couple of years. In partnership with Loughborough Uni to take part in pilot scheme – assessing digital health of town centres. Looking at towns across Warwickshire. Pulling together Digital High street intervention plan. Small independent retailers are not so good at using digital to promote business - will fall behind bigger businesses. Getting knowledge and skills improvements across towns. Delivered training programmes to businesses and town centres Case studies of businesses show that they are starting to engage and grow and support each other – training individual businesses. Network idea of collaboration, joint promotion, getting businesses to joint ownership of town centre experience and getting them to work collaboratively.</p> <p>Spacehive Looking at targeting areas and skills agenda -> Set up of civic crowdfunding portal. Set up capital placemaking fund to come forward via Spacehive looking to implement through town centre with capital element to raise funds for projects they want to see happening. Anyone to come forward for placemaking project. Encouraging people to take ownership of what happens in the towns.</p>	<p>AP: Anyone with town centre contacts with project ideas to come forward to Rachel Baconnet.</p> <p>AP: AH to get in touch with RB. RB to send around info on Spacehive.</p>

<u>7. HIGH STREET TASKFORCE & REVO NETWORK – UPDATE</u>	
Focus group to come together, RB, SK, PP to support. Meeting to be arranged. Issues around uncertainty, resilience planning, automation, augmented reality, labour, Brexit uncertainty. Thank you to group around support of the BID renewal.	
<u>8. FINANCIAL UPDATE</u>	
<p>Duplex Fund Increasing need of businesses to tap into lenders. Duplex fund launch date to be set next week. Funding “blind” to size and sector. Expression of Interest form is page-and-a-half long. Benefitting Coventry & Warwickshire companies. Loan interest free in sense that grant element will cover interest in a 5-year period. Grant is given for investment project in capital. Loan is given so business can undertake project from day one. For beneficiary the programme is simple.</p> <p>Coventry & Warwickshire Grants Programme DH: three new programmes – programmes have grant and non-financial support element programme to it. Part of that will be to support organisations to apply for the grants. Complete EOI. →Will run alongside Duplex. Still grant funds up for grabs. If companies need to apply, they need to apply this month. Businesses looking for energy grants, there’s still a pot available.</p> <p>Midlands Engine Investment Fund 9th March launch at the Ricoh was good. Good launch event. Only one company will have a small loan. Need fund managers to have better presence in the area. Meeting BBB quarterly for update. Successful Equity fund from the MEIF for Warwickshire business. If business plan is good, funding is not an issue. The Minerva Business Angel network can also offer equity investment for high quality applications.</p>	
<u>9. A.O.B.</u>	

ACTION POINTS

AP: CH to give demo of portal at next meeting

AP: LR – To help arrange a future meeting at farm

AP: Sarah to send around agenda of PHBG

AP: If anyone interested in feeding into employment land research for group –Planning group keen to set up stakeholder consultations.

AP: AH and SK to liaise on who can be contacted regarding planning and parking issues.

AP: Anyone with town centre contacts with project ideas to come forward to Rachel Baconnet.

AP: AH to get in touch with RB. RB to send around info on Spacehive.

NEXT MEETING:

11th July , 09.30-11am – Venue TBC