

**BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP (BLEP)
BOARD MEETING**

Held Friday 3 December 2021 from 9.30am, at Bosch Innovation Hub, Broadwater Park, Denham UB9 5HJ

Present: Andrew M Smith, Pinewood Studios (Chair)
Philippa Batting, Buckinghamshire Business First
Adrian Brown, The Berkeley Group plc
Hiren Gandhi, Blaser Mills
Richard Harrington, BLEP Chief Executive
Clare Pelham, Epilepsy Society
Martina Porter, All Spring Media
Cllr Steven Broadbent, Buckinghamshire Council
Cllr Martin Tett, Buckinghamshire Council
Cllr Gareth Williams, Buckinghamshire Council

Apologies: Lucy Edge, Satellite Applications Catapult
Eman Martin-Vignerte, Bosch
Prof James Tooley, University of Buckingham

In attendance: Kevin Hctor, BEIS/MHCLG Cities and Local Growth Unit
Claire Hunter, Buckinghamshire Council (Section 151 Officer)
Ian Barham, BLEP, Partnership Director
Sarah Fraser

SUMMARY MINUTES

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- Clare Pelham declared her daughter has taken on a role as Special Adviser to a DCMS Select Committee.
- As previously, development of the Buckinghamshire County Deal involves a number of those on the BLEP Board, but advice received from the Section 151 Officer has deemed discussion on this item can continue with all Board members present.

2 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING – 8 October 2021

- The minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2021 were agreed as an accurate record; all actions arising having been completed, on the agenda, or being ongoing workstreams.

3 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

Further to the Chief Executive's report previously circulated, the following was noted:

3.1 LEP Review/Levelling Up White Paper

- It was agreed to convene an additional Board meeting early in the New Year once the outcome of the LEP Review is known and the Levelling Up White Paper has been published.
- In terms of levelling up, town centre regeneration is a focus for Buckinghamshire, and the LEP will be reviewing employment opportunities within town centres and looking at how these link with availability of employment sites across the county.

3.2 Buckinghamshire Net Zero Audit

- A Buckinghamshire Net Zero Audit will shortly be commissioned to provide oversight on how the county is performing and where a green economy growth strategy might be positioned going forward.

- The Board requested a clear note be included within the audit of the likely timescales needed to achieve the various milestones to Net Zero within Buckinghamshire.

3.3 Internationalisation Plan

- Supporting Government's 'Global GB' agenda, Buckinghamshire continues to see opportunities to collaborate cross-border, to bring benefit to wider geographic areas.

3.4 BLEP Sub Groups

- Sub Groups feeding into BLEP Board (Remuneration & Nominations, Audit & Finance, Enterprise Zone, Capital Programme, etc) all continue to meet to ensure appropriate governance, and to focus on specific areas of the LEP's agenda; terms of reference for each will be refined in the coming months.
- The Audit & Finance Sub Group has monitored development of discussions with the LEP's Accountable Body, Buckinghamshire Council, re the planned release to the LEP of revenue funds; the anticipation being that this will be completed shortly.

3.5 Buckinghamshire Skills and Growth Hubs

- The Skills Hub and the Growth Hub continue to display outstanding performance.
- The Growth Hub has been successful in recent months in a bid to the Community Renewal Fund to help support tourism and hospitality businesses in the county; a significant result, Buckinghamshire not sitting within Government's priority areas.
- The Skills Advisory Panel is seeking a clearer understanding of those areas seeing a mismatch between skills available and jobs available, particularly as this relates to areas of deprivation within the county. This will build on work looking at how to assist individuals with transferrable skills to move between sectors and how to remove the barriers to taking up employment across the county.
- The Board noted the significant difficulties being experienced in progressing employment discussions with DWP/Job Centres and providing the bridge into business; an issue that it appears is reflected across the country. It was suggested there is a lack of knowledge within DWP of the detail on claimant count individuals and what their transferrable skills might be, resulting in an inability to match individuals with available and appropriate roles. It was suggested simple "tweaks" to systems in place would enable more successful outcomes.

The Board requested that:

- **Kevin Hoctor note issues experienced with DWP and feed these into Government.**
- **Andrew Smith progress discussions with Buckinghamshire Council around said issues so that these may also be fed back to the Secretary of State.**

3.6 Enterprise Zone

- The Board noted the outstanding results being achieved in the Enterprise Zones across Buckinghamshire in terms of floor space created and occupied; the majority of businesses occupying space being within the field of R&D.

The Board requested:

- **Kevin Hoctor investigate whether comparable figures are available for other LEP areas in terms of the creation of employment floor space on Enterprise Zone sites.**

4 **SPENDING REVIEW AND FUTURE FUNDING LANDSCAPE**

Further to the paper circulated and the presentation provided, the Board commented:

- Buckinghamshire gets no credit for inward investment spend in the Creative Industries as a result of the international film and screen productions created in the county.

- There is an enormous, and building, skills deficit within Film & TV production as a result, mainly, of increased production coming to the UK; approximately an additional 40k people will be needed by 2025.
- Buckinghamshire businesses (particularly SMEs) find it difficult to interact with the Department for International Trade, with a need to “translate” Government speak.
- There is a lack of clarity around specific points of contact/individuals within Government departments eg for discussions around Hydrogen/Green Energy Strategies.
- Digital investment:
 - There is more to do to finalise requests for freedoms/flexibilities in the County Deal.
 - Further funding is available to help improve digital connectivity from which the county should be seeking to benefit.
 - There is more to do to connect up public sector ‘hubs’: schools, hospitals, etc.

5 **BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY DEAL**

- Board members noted the paper circulated, the latest discussions being held with Government and interested partners around Levelling Up, Net Zero, Global Britain and the possibility of a County Deal, and reflected that Buckinghamshire does not sit easily with Government’s focus on Mayoral Combined Authorities and two-tier authorities.
- A meeting scheduled for 1 December with Government officials to discuss the County Deal has been deferred to a later date.

6 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- Nothing of note.

7 **FUTURE BOARD MEETINGS**

- As above, an additional meeting may be convened once the outcome of the LEP Review and the Levelling Up White Paper are published.

7.1 Planned meetings for 2022 (all 9.30am-12pm)

- 11 February, 8 April, 27 May, 22 July, 30 September, 9 December