

**BUCKINGHAMSHIRE THAMES VALLEY
LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP (BTVLEP) BOARD MEETING**

Held Wednesday 26 September 2018 from 9am at Waterside Theatre, Exchange Street, Aylesbury HP20 1UG

Present: Cllr Steve Bowles, Aylesbury Vale District Council
Cllr Isobel Darby, Chiltern District Council
Cllr Nick Naylor, South Bucks District Council
Cllr Martin Tett, Buckinghamshire County Council
Cllr Katrina Wood, Wycombe District Council
Rebecca Bunting, Buckinghamshire Business First (Buckinghamshire New University)
Hiren Gandhi, Buckinghamshire Business First (Blaser Mills) (Alternate)
Michael Garvey, Buckinghamshire Business First (Chandler Garvey)
Eman Martin-Vignerte, Buckinghamshire Business First (Bosch)
Andrew Smith, Buckinghamshire Business First (Pinewood)

Apologies: Adam Stronach, Buckinghamshire Business First (Harwood Hutton)

In attendance: Phil Swann, Shared Intelligence (Part meeting)
Lisa McCance, Shared Intelligence (Part meeting)
Richard Turl, BEIS South Central & West
Fiorella Mugari, Buckinghamshire County Council
Philippa Batting, BBF Managing Director
Richard Harrington, BTVLEP Chief Executive
Ian Barham, BTVLEP Partnerships Manager
Jackie Campbell, BTVLEP Skills Development Manager
Rupert Waters, BBF Head of Economic Research
Sarah Fraser

SUMMARY MINUTES

1 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING - 24 July 2018

- The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- Andrew Smith re-declared an interest in respect of the Royal Holloway University bid that has been supported by both the BTVLEP and Pinewood Studios.

3 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

3.1 Local Growth Fund Call

- An open call was issued following the last BTVLEP Board, to meet the BTVLEP Board's criteria, utilising approximately £2m unallocated LGF monies. Applications to this call will be shortlisted by Regeneris for decision at the next BTVLEP Board meeting.
- Details for all applications received will be shared, including scoring matrix/recommendations, well in advance of the next meeting to allow time for the Board to consider the applications.

4 LOCAL INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY (LIS)

- An update was provided on development of the Buckinghamshire LIS, and how this feeds into the cross corridor visioning/Local Industrial Strategy work. Discussions with businesses/Local Authority officers will continue in the coming weeks.

- Recognising that Government does not consider the LIS to be a bidding document and that LEPs will be asked to develop an investment plan to run alongside the LIS, the Board offered suggestions for improvements to the draft LIS circulated.
- As a trailblazer area, Buckinghamshire's LIS will be one of the first in the country and will be the result of a co-design process with Government, officials both assisting and invested in this process. Feedback received to date from Government has been largely positive and, through the LIS, Buckinghamshire is starting to identify its place within the 'eco system' between the two main areas in the growth corridor.
- Government has begun the process of looking at how the LIS will fit with other departments and will soon be starting a process of cross-departmental engagement.

5 LEP REVIEW

- Government has asked for a response to the LEP Review by 28 September on geography considerations; and by 31 October on the implementation plan dealing with structure and procedural issues.
- Government has recognised geography issues will be the most challenging element to resolve; there is a focus on addressing overlaps with an emphasis on simplicity in terms of geography and accountability etc.

5.1 LEP Geography

- Shared Intelligence had been commissioned following the last BTVLEP Board meeting to review information available (Travel to Work Areas, productivity information within Bucks and in neighbouring areas, Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessments, etc) and provide an options analysis on local and wider geography issues; the results of this work were shared with the Board.
- The issue of geography had been complicated by the delay in receiving an outcome to the question on the modernisation of local government in Buckinghamshire. However, the advice from Government has been that where there is a 2 tier authority in a county that the lower tier should sit with the upper.
- The Board noted the letter sent to Government from District Councils advising of Aylesbury Vale's decision to wholly commit to SEMLEP; and the 3 Southern Districts' support for this decision and request for help in finding an alternative to the BTVLEP which they felt would be left untenable if split.
- It was noted that comments made by Ann Limb (SEMLEP Chair) at a meeting with Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Jake Berry MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Housing, Communities and Local Government, officials and other LEP Chairs, regarding geography had expressed a personal rather than SEMLEP view on overlaps.
- Feedback from the BBF Growth Hub (with membership of over 70% of the private sector workforce in the county) indicated businesses in the county identify very strongly with a 'Buckinghamshire' geography; this was supported by commercial property market intelligence which sees significant movement within the county but far less across county boundaries. BBF has had no businesses openly identifying with the Midlands. BBF counts around 500 Milton Keynes businesses within its membership; businesses looking for a greater level of support on the ground than is currently provided locally.
- The Board noted the significant investment made in the county via BTVLEP, £100m in the county as a whole with c£30m in the overlap area vs c£3m invested via SEMLEP (in overlapping geography at Aylesbury Vale). North/South connectivity remains a priority for BTVLEP (as per the Strategic Economic Plan) and it was hoped to find future funding to resolve this issue, removing this barrier to growth.
- In response to the Functional Economic Market Area question set by government, the rationale for a Buckinghamshire FEMA is supported by local underpinning facts including Wycombe and Aylesbury Travel to Work Area, Buckinghamshire Strategic Housing Market Area, Commercial property characteristics, transport and infrastructure north/south connectivity priorities and productivity that, in combination, set the area apart as a cohesive Functional Economic Market Area.
- With regards to wider geography, BTVLEP is working with neighbouring LEPs and the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority on jointly commissioning the strategic growth corridor vision, inclusive of the southern Buckinghamshire Districts initially excluded from corridor discussions. BTVLEP has collaborated successfully with neighbouring LEPs on a number of occasions and plans to continue to do so where appropriate. Some Board members expressed the view that the LEP should not confine itself to a specific area when looking at wider geography and District Council Board members declined to give agreement to wider geography being 'red lined' with the CaMKOx corridor.

- District Council Board members noted that FEMA information presented was open to a number of interpretations and raised concerns on whether BTVLEP would be able to achieve the necessary scale going forward to give it legitimacy in the eyes of Government.
- The Board discussed the relevance of alignment with, for example, skills/education (and the work of the Skills Board), and health authorities when looking at geography discussions and noted the importance of Government taking soundings from the business community. The success to date of BTVLEP in drawing investment into the county, and the depth of engagement with the business community via BBF (both in the county and at the BTVLEP Board table) was highlighted.
- Private sector Board members highlighted the huge uncertainties for business at the moment around, for example, Brexit and expressed serious concerns at the prospect of destroying an immensely successful Buckinghamshire LEP that had secured significant investment in the county to date, noting that Government has mandated business, not politics, to lead LEPs.
- Board members unanimously endorsed the message to Government via the LEP Network that discussions around geography are distracting from delivery of Local/National Industrial Strategies.
- District Council Board members questioned the possibility of leaving the current LEP (including overlap) in place, responding to Government in this vein. It was noted this was possible and the Secretary of State would then take a view on the proposal. However, this did not follow guidance issued by Government.
- The recommendation presented in respect of overlap results from the prioritisation and leadership shown in economic development activity including, business support, Enterprise Zone, and Skills; comparison of the LEP investment ratios in the overlap area; and the relative simplicity of implementing the Buckinghamshire option over a SEMLEP option that creates numerous secondary issues.
- **The Board agreed the BTVLEP LEP Review Annex B response, by a majority of 6 votes (private sector and Buckinghamshire County Council representatives; Andrew Smith, Rebecca Bunting, Michael Garvey, Eman Martin-Vignerte, Hiren Gandhi, Cllr Martin Tett) to 4 votes (District Council representatives; Cllr Steve Bowles, Cllr Isobel Darby, Cllr Nick Naylor, Cllr Katrina Wood), that:**
 - a) **No change is proposed to the Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA) underpinning both BTVLEP Strategic Economic Plan and draft Buckinghamshire Local Industrial Strategy as Buckinghamshire represents the ‘best fit’ FEMA.**
 - b) **The current overlap at Aylesbury Vale should be removed, with Aylesbury Vale being placed within BTVLEP and removed from SEMLEP.**
 - c) **No change is proposed to wider geography, at the present time, though government is asked to note the successful cross Growth Corridor LEP and Combined Authority collaborative work underway and the strong preference to consolidate this joint work.**

5.2 Implementation Plan

- Government wishes to see greater diversity on LEP Boards, but understands this is not enforceable and that the “best candidate for the job” should be appointed to LEP Boards. Government’s intention is that Local Authority representation will form one third of future LEP Boards, with business representatives forming the remaining two thirds.
- **It was agreed Board members will forward suggestions/comments to Richard Harrington to enable a response on Annex C, the implementation plan, to be prepared for submission to Government by 31 October (the Board reviewing prior to submission).**

6 **DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

- Friday 23 November 2018, 9.30am, venue tbc.
- Friday 11 January 2019, 9.30am, venue tbc