

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

Held Friday 15 June 2012 from 9.30am at Pinewood Studios, Pinewood Road, Iver Heath, Bucks SL0 0NH

**Present:** Cllr Adrian Busby, South Buckinghamshire District Council  
Cllr Michael Edmonds, Aylesbury Vale District Council  
Cllr Martin Tett, Buckinghamshire County Council  
Cllr Nick Rose, Chiltern District Council (Alternate)  
Cllr Roger Wilson, Wycombe District Council (Alternate)  
Michael Garvey, Buckinghamshire Business First (Stupples Chandler Garvey)  
Alex Pratt, Buckinghamshire Business First (Serious Brands)  
David Pritchard, Buckinghamshire Business First (Manches) (Alternate)  
Andrew Smith, Buckinghamshire Business First (Pinewood)

**Apologies:** Cllr Arif Hussain, Wycombe District Council  
Ruth Farwell, Buckinghamshire Business First (Bucks New University)  
Rob Spurrett, Buckinghamshire Business First (ComDev)

**In attendance:** Philippa Batting, Buckinghamshire Business First  
Jim Sims, Buckinghamshire Business First  
Heather Dean, Buckinghamshire Business First (Part meeting)  
Chris Rawson, Buckinghamshire Business First (Part meeting)  
Sarah Fraser, Buckinghamshire Business First

## **SUMMARY MINUTES**

### **1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Martin Tett declared an interest in the discussions around the Growing Places Fund allocation to the Handy Cross project in that Buckinghamshire County Council owns land at Handy Cross.

### **2 CHILTERN DISTRICT COUNCIL – CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

#### **Challenges**

- The limited supply of land and premises for businesses looking to move to the area, or for expansion.
- Where land is available, the Council are under significant pressure to release this to developers for housing, a situation not helped by central government policy changes.
- There are few large employers in the area and this leads to out commuting as people travel to find work.
- Unemployment in the area is low but rising and there are areas of significant deprivation.
- Changes to housing benefits which will have a significant effect on CDC, particularly in view of the lack of availability of affordable housing.
- There large (and growing) proportion of elderly residents.

#### **Benefits/Opportunities**

- The Chilterns are a beautiful place to live, residents are largely well educated (the education facilities being partly what attract people), and the area benefits from excellent road and rail links.
- There are a high number of micro businesses within the district and there is the opportunity to encourage growth here, through networks rather than advisers, and helping to be innovative with routes to funding.
- The encouragement of naturally forming clusters within the district, working with the private sector and 'bolting on' to existing centres where possible, and supporting the opportunities available to smaller businesses through the Green Deal.

### **BTVLEP Role**

- Lobbying central government for an appropriate balance between employment and housing land, allowing the provision of incubation space for young entrepreneurs and micro businesses.
- Promoting the benefits of economic development and the need to create jobs and opportunities to residents within the county.

## **3 BUCKS DEVELOPMENT SITES – PLANNING REVIEW**

- ONS data available shows:-
  - Bucks has a relatively high proportion of aged commercial stock.
  - Bucks has a relatively low proportion of factory floor space.
  - Rateable values are relatively high compared to neighbouring LEP areas.
  - The proportion of all planning applications being withdrawn, called in or turned away in Bucks is consistent, or lower, than the South East as a whole.
  - The proportion of all planning application being granted is higher in two of the four districts in Bucks than the South East average.
- Planning is an area crucial to economic development, responsibility for which lies with District Councils.
- The BTVLEP Board wish to work with/through the existing Planning Officers Group, to tackle this agenda.

### **BTVLEP Role**

- Establishing a better understanding between Local Authorities and Business with regards to Planning.
- Helping to make the case to local residents for job creation and sustainable economic development, recognising the community resistance to this.
- Helping to ‘showcase’ Bucks outside of its borders in order that the county might improve its ability to attract larger businesses, with the potential for real growth, and encourage Fund Managers in London to invest in commercial property in the county.
- Improving Bucks’ standing with the UKTI etc.
- Petitioning government for funding for improved infrastructure in the areas where growth is possible in order to encourage this.
- Encouraging developers to deliver promised infrastructure improvements as part of development works.
- Lobbying central government for appropriate balance between housing and employment land allocation.
- Striving for a better provision of affordable housing.

## **4 BTVLEP SUB GROUPS - UPDATE**

### **4.1 Skills Panel**

- The Skills Panel has been established, is chaired by Ruth Farwell, and involves senior representatives from Aylesbury College, Amersham & Wycombe College, Bucks County Council, Job Centre Plus and Buckinghamshire Business First.
- The group will be considering the outcomes from the recent Warwick Skills Study and will use this, and other research pieces available, to focus on two or three key issues to progress on behalf of the LEP.
- The group will produce an action plan outlining where things are not working, particularly around NEETs, and how these might be addressed. Suggestions on how to retain young people within the county once they are qualified will also be a key focus.

### **4.2 Infrastructure Panel – Broadband Update**

- The Infrastructure Panel has now been established, chaired by Michael Garvey and will be holding its first meeting on 22 June.
- The BDUK Project is now live and is being well supported by Bucks County Council, Bucks Business First and Hertfordshire County Council. The Project Board is in place (with Michael Garvey as Co-Chair), including representatives from the above organisations and external expertise. Work will be undertaken to demonstrate the full impact that this investment is having, not just in terms of the number of homes/premises being served and to ensure the most efficient route by which this investment can be returned to the Growing Places Fund. Access to fast, reliable broadband was seen as vital to growth.

## 5 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

### 5.1 Board Guidelines

- The Board agreed the need for clear, formal operating guidelines and clearly documented governance procedures. A proposal will be brought to the next meeting for approval.

### 5.2 Greater Thames Valley Collaboration

- A meeting had been held with the Chairs of Hertfordshire LEP, Thames Valley Berkshire LEP and the Vice Chair of Oxfordshire LEP to discuss areas of joint working during which the possibility of supporting the expansion plans at Heathrow had been raised. It was agreed to defer this subject to the next Board meeting in order to allow time for a full discussion of the implications of the proposed expansion.

### 5.3 Resourcing the BTVLEP

- The principle was agreed that all partners on the Board should contribute a fair share of cash and in kind support to resource the BTVLEP secretariat.
- A proposal would be prepared by the secretariat in conjunction with the Chief Executives of the 5 Local Authorities with the suggestion that funding be requested proportionate to population count within each area, but no decision on this was taken.
- The Board asked for information as to how the funding would be spent and for a forward plan of requirements for up to the next 3 years.
- Agreement would be sought from DCLG/BIS to utilise part of the GPF2 funding to support some of the work of the secretariat.

## 6 FUNDING UPDATES

### 6.1 Growing Places Fund 1

- **East/West Rail** - It was hoped that Bucks County Council (as accountable body) would be transferring the agreed funding to EWR w/c 18 June. It was anticipated that this funding would be 'recycled' via a CIL top slice (although this was still to be agreed and more information was requested), to be returned in 2014.
- **Broadband** – The Broadband project had been discussed earlier. The Board agreed that delivery of the Broadband project was vital to growth and recognised that the 'recycled' benefits may not necessarily all be in terms of cash returning to the fund.
- **Handy Cross** – A Heads of Terms agreement is being drawn up with Wycombe District Council. Funding will be utilised to enable infrastructure to move to Phase 2 of this project; the accelerated delivery bringing forward increased employment floor space. The mechanism for 'recycling' funds was still to be finalised but was likely to be through CIL.

It was agreed that:-

- If possible funding granted through the GPF should be returned with interest, in order to maintain the 'pot' in effect at a static level. The secretariat were asked to review the model in place with Aylesbury Vale Advantage. It was hoped to be able to fund all future projects in this way.
- Checks should be made to ensure no infringement on FSA regulations through this course of action.
- That projects supported by the BTVLEP should display "Backed by the Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership".
- That the GPF1 projects should be progressed with urgency.

### 6.2 Growing Places Fund 2

- In order to meet the requirements of momentum and pace called for with GPF funding, it was agreed to draw on known 'stalled' projects that will unlock growth rather than moving to an open, competitive call for projects in this round – although it was considered that this would be appropriate in the event of future rounds of funding being available.

- The Board agreed that the appointment of an independent assessor, looking at projects forwarded was not necessary as there is a clear process in place for Board members to declare any conflicts of interest and there are significant skills and experience at the BTVLEP Board table to enable full and considered discussions leading to the selection of appropriate projects.
- A list of project recommendations will be made available for consideration at the next meeting, with a clear indication of the scale of the funding required.

## 7 **BTVLEP ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY/GROWTH MANIFESTO**

- It was agreed to carry this item forward to the next meeting.

## 8 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### LEP APPG Enquiry

- It was reported that an All Party Parliamentary Group enquiry had been announced into the effectiveness of LEPs. The BTVLEP would be putting itself forward as interested in contributing to this enquiry.

### Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES)

- A meeting was to be held with Neil McInroy of CLES on Friday 13 July, to which all BTVLEP Board members were invited. CLES are the UK's leading research and member organisation dedicated to economic development.

## 9 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Friday 20 July 2012, 9.30am, Instron Europe, Coronation Road, High Wycombe, Bucks HP12 3SY