

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

Held Friday 16 November from 9.30am at The Clare Foundation, Wycombe Road, Saunderton, Bucks HP14 4BF

Present: Cllr Adrian Busby, South Bucks District Council
Cllr Michael Edmonds, Aylesbury Vale District Council
Cllr Arif Hussain, Wycombe District Council (Part meeting)
Cllr Martin Tett, Buckinghamshire County Council
Cllr Fred Wilson, Chiltern District Council (Alternate)
Ruth Farwell, Buckinghamshire Business First (Bucks New University)
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 Nick Rose, Chiltern District Council
Rob Spurrett, Buckinghamshire Business First (ComDev)

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

SUMMARY MINUTES

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no new declarations of interest at this meeting.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 12 October 2012

- **Item 7 – Funding Updates** – Minute to be amended to read “The Board also agreed that the payment of interest would not be allowed to get in the way of progressing plans”.

2.1 Matters Arising

- **Item 7 – Funding Updates** – A short ministerial briefing on the first of the Growing Places Fund projects to break ground and the growth taking place at Berryfields to be prepared by the secretariat.

3 BTVLEP PLAN FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH

- The Plan had been amended in light of responses received to public consultation and would be further amended to reflect additional comments from the Board.
- With these comments included the Board agreed the adoption of the BTVLEP Plan for Sustainable Economic Growth (with planned 6 monthly reviews) and asked that this be forwarded to BIS/DCLG.
- Local Authority Board members undertook to forward the final version of the Plan to their respective Cabinet Members and Officers for information.

4 GROWING PLACES FUND UPDATE

- Legal approval had been received for draft contracts and these had been issued to project sponsors.
- The Hughenden Spine Road and Handy Cross projects would be taken to Wycombe District Council Cabinet for approval in December 2012 and January 2013 respectively.
- East/West Rail project - final confirmation was expected from Network Rail re releasing back the £0.5m funding allocated to support this project; this funding would then be reallocated into a project with clear ability to repay the funds. Proposals for utilising the released funds will be considered by the Board at its meeting on 11 January 2013.
- Broadband – The State Aid question around the broadband project remained unresolved and all possible pressure is being brought to bear on BDUK and Ministers to bring this matter to a swift conclusion. The secretariat were asked to obtain independent legal advice as to whether the Broadband project could be procured and progressed without BDUK and without EU clearance.

5 CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

5.1 County Deals/City Deals

- The secretariat will consult with LAs and bring forward what a county deal for Bucks might look like.
- Bids for a City Deal were due to be forwarded by Milton Keynes and Oxford and discussions were being held as to how these may affect Bucks, if successful.
- City/County Deals were thought to be the precursor to the single pot funding recommended in the Heseltine Review.

5.2 Whitehall Seconded

- The BTVLEP had approached government re acquiring a Cabinet Office seconded; decision awaited.

5.3 Cross LEP Working

- Assuming recommendations in the Heseltine Review are accepted and greater resource is devolved via LEPs, issues around distribution of funding to areas sitting in two LEPs will become even more relevant.
- A meeting had been held with Gloucestershire LEP, identified as being closest in terms of strategic thinking and priorities to the BTVLEP. It was agreed that it would be useful to give presentations to each other's Boards and AP would progress this.
- Other LEP groups were being formed to discuss shared agenda: the rural economy; issues specific to the Greater Thames Valley; etc.

5.4 Digital Infrastructure

- Meetings are being held with ministers to try and keep up pressure on central government to review the national digital strategy.

6 HESELTINE REVIEW

- The Board agreed there was little point debating the specifics of the review until Government had had a chance to respond in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement, due on 5 December.
- It was agreed to construct a response to be sent to BIS in advance of the Autumn Statement focussing on the items in the Heseltine Review that the BTVLEP would definitely like to see implemented.

7 LOCAL TRANSPORT BODIES

- Local Transport Bodies (LTBs) will be the route through which the Department of Transport will devolve funding for major transport schemes from 2015 onwards.
- Bucks will seek to maintain a light touch governance structure, building on existing structures/groups to provide the assurance framework required by DfT. The BTVLEP to have a place on the LTB.

- Work is being undertaken to identify a list of the transport schemes that Bucks wishes to fund and the priority on these. This information, together with clarity around the governance arrangements, would be brought back to the BTVLEP Board prior to being forwarded to DfT at the end of April 2013.
- It was confirmed that the Chairs for BTVLEP, SEMLEP and the Oxfordshire LEP would meet with the leads of the three respective LTBs to discuss projects across shared geography.

8 **SKILLS – THE ISSUES, PROGRESS AND PLANS**

- The progress made to date by the Skills Sub Group in analysing the evidence base; providing granularity on the demand for future jobs/skills needed; and working with local employers was outlined. For the moment the key task is around aligning what funding is available with the priorities identified.
- The Group will be looking to bid into other funding streams and the BTVLEP Board might like to consider utilising part of the £250k awarded to the LEP in 2013/14 to provide additional infrastructure to support the aims of the Skills Sub Group.
- It was important to note that Bucks is not starting from a “zero base” in respect of its Skills work and there are already achievements to celebrate.
- The Skills Sub Group are keen to help employers recruit from the local population but also to make sure that young people are aware of all the opportunities available to them, ensuring work experience placements are provided so that students get a real feel for all the avenues open to them.
- The Group would also be looking at how to encourage graduates to return (or come) to Bucks by linking companies with universities; and would also be looking at the skills needed in the priority sectors identified by the LEP.
- It was proposed to establish a Virtual Employers Network with those businesses who have expressed a keen interest, through BBF, in being involved in skills development. Organisations such as the Engineering Employers’ Federation (EEF) would also be involved in this work.

9 **INFRASTRUCTURE SUB GROUP UPDATE**

- An update on the infrastructure project (looking at infrastructure currently in place overlaid with a number of things, such as utilities availability) would be brought to the February 2013 Board meeting.
- Meetings had been held with the Bucks Planning Officers Group and it was planned to establish a Developers Group providing information from the ground as to where blockages to growth lie.
- The Planning Officers Group to be approached regarding the possibility of adopting installation of Fibre To The Premises as policy across Buckinghamshire for all new builds.

10 **BBF PRIORITIES**

Priorities

- Job creation
- Business Support, particularly in light of the Business Link website being taken down
- Working with the Chambers, IoD, FSB and CBI to provide a clear picture of what is available for businesses
- Providing information on routes to access finance
- Promoting exporting and assisting businesses to develop their export market
- Supporting young people with information, advice and guidance relating to their careers

Concerns

- Ensuring that all the organisations involved in economic development are aligned and working in the same direction
- Ensuring that ‘Team Bucks’ is working together to look at funding available from Europe and distributing the proceeds as they are granted

Some Achievements since April 2012

- 223 Apprenticeship places identified in 100 days
- 557 businesses assisted
- £1.2m grants awarded to individual businesses
- 50k tonne reduction in CO₂ emissions
- 180 new jobs created
- Hub usage increased to approx 25 businesses per week
- Handling 32 inward investment enquiries
- Very close relationships established with the Business Representative Organisations

10.1 UKTI

- A visit had recently been held for 20 individuals from UKTI posts around the world who are funnelling inward investment enquiries. The BTVLEP/BBF would now communicate direct with these representatives to ensure they had access to up-to-date information on Bucks.

11 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

11.1 Martin Baker

- Martin-Baker had recently issued an invitation to members of the BTVLEP Board to tour the manufacturing and design facilities at the company. It was suggested approaching Martin Baker re hosting the February 2013 Board meeting, tying this in to a tour of the premises.

12 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Friday 11 January 2013, 9.30am, The Jubilee Room, AVDC Offices, The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury HP19 8FF. **To be followed by a meeting with SEMLEP and Whitehall representatives 12-3pm.**

The meeting closed at 12.25pm.