

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE THAMES VALLEY LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP (BTVLEP) BOARD MEETING

Held Friday 20 January 2012 from 9.30am at The Clare Foundation, Wycombe Road, Saunderton, Bucks HP14 4BF

Present: Cllr Adrian Busby, South Buckinghamshire District Council
Cllr Arif Hussain, Wycombe District Council
Cllr Nick Rose, Chiltern District Council
Cllr Martin Tett, Buckinghamshire County Council
Ruth Farwell, Buckinghamshire Business First (Bucks New University)
Michael Garvey, Buckinghamshire Business First (Stupples Chandler Garvey)
Alex Pratt, Buckinghamshire Business First (Serious Brands)
Rob Spurrett, Buckinghamshire Business First (ComDev)

Apologies: Cllr Michael Edmonds, Aylesbury Vale District Council
Andrew Smith, Buckinghamshire Business First (Pinewood)

In attendance: Cllr Fred Wilson, Chiltern District Council
Chris Williams, Buckinghamshire County Council
Marcus Rogers, Buckinghamshire County Council
Stuart Jones, Buckinghamshire Business First
Sarah Fraser, Buckinghamshire Business First

SUMMARY MINUTES

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- There were no new declarations of interest in relation to any agenda items.

2 EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST/BIDS - Update

2.1 Growing Places Fund (GPF)

- A number of significant projects had been identified that met the criteria of revolving investment and a clear process for decision making/recommendations for approval would be brought to the BTVLEP Board at its meeting on 24 February.
- It was agreed to seek clarification from CLG around the type of projects that could be considered for support from this fund as the literature available and statements being made by Ministers appeared contradictory.
- It was acknowledged that this was a time sensitive issue as central government were keen to see results quickly with the prime motivators being jobs growth, arising largely as a result of unlocking stalled infrastructure projects.
- It was noted that funding, once received, would be un-ringfenced.

2.2 Start Up Fund

- It was confirmed that the BTVLEP had been successful in being allocated (in principle) £50k through the Start Up Fund.
- Applications to the Capacity Fund were due in early February. This would provide £25-£30k funding each year for 3 years. The criteria for applications to the Capacity Fund would differ to those used for the Start Up Fund.

2.3 Growth and Innovation Fund (GIF)

- It was agreed that the Skills Study being conducted by Bucks Business First would provide a clear evidence base to support a bid to the GIF and once available this would be discussed by BTVLEP Board members forming the Skills Panel.

2.4 Broadband Update

- Pressure was being placed on BDUK for a final decision on the Broadband bid submitted some months previously.
- It was agreed to raise this issue with BIS/DCLG representatives later the same day and to prepare a letter from the County/District Council Leaders in the next week or so if a decision from BDUK was not forthcoming.
- In connection with Broadband capability, a visit was planned to BT's R&D facility in order to understand future developments in this area.

2.5 Rural Growth Network

- This was a £15m funding pot to encourage six pilot projects around the country stimulating business/jobs growth in rural areas. Bids to this fund were required by 31 January 2012.
- Ngage Solutions Limited had been commissioned to produce a bid focussed on the private sector and making use of empty units in business parks to set up incubation space with appropriate infrastructure and business advice/support.
- It was agreed that the report produced by Ngage Solutions Limited would be forwarded to the Board for their comments following which the bid would be submitted.

2.6 Get Britain Building Investment Fund

- Applications to this fund would be made direct by developers.
- It was agreed a clear communication mechanism would be established for funds such as this where bids needed to be made direct from developers etc to ensure that people were aware of what is available and where/ how they could access support in completing bids.
- It was agreed that the BTVLEP Board would be informed about new funding streams available as soon as these arose so that they might promote these to their own networks.
- It was agreed a database of developers etc in the county should be established to enable information to be forwarded quickly as it became available. This to be progressed with Local Authority Planning functions.
- It was suggested that local MPs be kept abreast of BTVLEP bids so that they could actively support these in Whitehall.

3 **POOLED FUNDING**

- It was acknowledged that infrastructure development in Bucks would far exceed the monies available through the Growing Places Fund in the current phase or iterations still to come.
- Information was provided to the Board around current/emerging sources/amounts of funding available and where the locus of control lay.
- The Board agreed the principle of establishing a collective infrastructure fund, with the caveat from LA representatives that not all identified funds represented 'new' money and that care needed to be taken not to dilute funds being spent on local people.
- A new Community Infrastructure Levy introduced across the county to stimulate economic development was seen as a good idea, assuming this could be implemented.

- It was agreed that more discussion was needed on this subject to:-
 - Review the possibilities/issues.
 - Establish greater clarity on potential sources of funding.
 - Investigate how private sector funding could be leveraged to match-fund anything provided by Local Authorities.

4 LGA ECONOMY & TRANSPORT PROGRAMME BOARD

- It was agreed that Martin Tett would continue to be the BTVLEP's link to this body.
- At the latest meeting there had been discussion about the need for the Highways Agency to be more proactive in supporting infrastructure developments.

5 LOCAL TRANSPORT CONSORTIA

- The LTCs were being established as a means through which the government could disseminate funding for local major transport schemes from 2015 onwards.
- It was agreed that, assuming the consultation around what level the LTC would sit at (individual LEP; consortium of LEPs etc) began end Jan/early Feb, a draft response should be provided for consideration at the BTVLEP Board meeting on 24 February.

6 EAST/WEST RAIL

- This scheme was being promoted by a number of Local Authorities including BCC, Oxfordshire County Council, Milton Keynes Council and others. It was envisaged that the development would bring benefits to all LAs within Bucks though increased connectivity.
- The majority of funding for EWR had been granted in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement, dependent upon a suitably convincing business case and appropriate local contribution.
- Local contribution to the scheme would be in the region of £30-£50m over the next 10-15 years but in the immediate timeframe £2m was needed to fund costs of the EWR team past June/July 2012 and the cost of development work prior to actual construction commencing.
- Discussions had taken place re BTVLEP, SEMLEP and OXLEP providing this immediate funding. BTVLEP have identified EWR as a possible beneficiary of part of the Bucks GPF allocation. OXLEP had intimated that they were minded to support the project as well.
- It was agreed to write to SEMLEP to alert them to BTVLEP's support for the project which was seen as a strategically important piece of infrastructure for both jobs and growth.
- The Board asked that any potential contribution to the (approx) £2m running/development costs be calculated carefully based on GDP by area or some equivalent measure.

7 SEMLEP DISCUSSIONS

- An initial meeting had taken place between the Chairs of BTVLEP and SEMLEP with a view to sharing information, and discussing areas of mutual interest and possible joint working where appropriate.
- A joint Board session had been arranged for the SEMLEP and BTVLEP Boards on Wednesday 12 September at AVDC to share business momentum and progress.
- A formal Memorandum of Understanding between SEMLEP and BTVLEP would be brought to the Board for approval at its meeting on 24 February.
- It was agreed that a joint meeting with Oxfordshire LEP and the Thames Valley Berkshire LEP Board should also be explored.

8 BOARD COMPOSITION/BRO ENGAGEMENT

- The Board confirmed their agreement to the draft letter produced in response to Ministers regarding the Board composition of the BTVLEP.
- It was confirmed the BTVLEP was actively engaging with the business representative organisations through BBF, particularly the FSB, IoD and Thames Valley Chamber.
- The Board confirmed their agreement to the 'branding' being used for the BTVLEP.

9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Project Pinewood

- It was agreed that the BTVLEP were not in a place to comment on individual planning applications.

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Friday 24 February 2012, from 9.30-11.30am, venue tbc.