

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

Held Friday 1 November 2013 from 9.30am at
Robert Bosch Ltd, Unit 202, Riverside Way, Uxbridge UB8 2YF

Present: Cllr Neil Blake, Aylesbury Vale District Council
Cllr Adrian Busby, South Bucks District Council
Cllr Nick Rose, Chiltern District Council
Cllr Richard Scott, Wycombe 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)
David Pritchard, Buckinghamshire Business First (Penningtons Manches LLP) (Alternate)
Andrew Smith, Buckinghamshire Business First (Pinewood)

Apologies: Rob Spurrett, Buckinghamshire Business First (ComDev)

In attendance: Richard Harrington, BTVLEP Chief Executive
Jim Sims, BTVLEP Development Manager
Sarah Fraser

SUMMARY MINUTES

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/BOARD MEMBERSHIP

There were no new declarations of interest at this meeting. Cllr Neil Blake was welcomed as the new AVDC nomination to the BTVLEP Board.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 20 September 2013

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as an accurate record and were signed accordingly.

2.1 Matters Arising

- 2.1.1 • **Local Planning Authorities' meeting with Nick Boles MP** - Discussion had been raised on 10 October around Permitted Development Rights and the amount of employment land being lost to residential development; Duty to Co-operate; and whether it would be possible for LEPs to become statutory consultees on strategic planning applications (this latter would not be possible as many LEPs are not legally constituted bodies).

All other outstanding actions had been undertaken or were covered on the agenda.

3 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

3.1 Case Conference

- It was confirmed that, further to the asks made of Government at the Case Conference, Bucks Business First had recently been recognised as the first non-City Growth Hub. This opened the door to the possibility of bidding for additional resources and funding to grow this facility. Additionally, UKTI were supportive of providing additional dedicated resource to the BTVLEP to boost inward investment capabilities in the county.

- The remaining asks were being progressed and broadened out to include discussion around residual public sector land assets.
- A further update with Whitehall departments was planned for Thursday 7 November.

3.2 Single Local Growth Fund

- Meetings held recently with the Department for Transport had highlighted the critical need for infrastructure investment in Bucks if the county is to be able to unlock employment sites and growth.

3.3 GTV6 and 5G Project

- Work was underway to establish a test bed for 5G capabilities across the Greater Thames Valley 6 LEPs.
- If approval for the pilot is gained there may be an opportunity to request funding to provide the infrastructure needed, but it was thought consideration should also be given to resources already available within the county that may be able to assist in providing increased coverage eg whether Local Authority sites could provide open access, free wifi capabilities etc.
- It was noted that the Countryside Alliance would be asking its members to take part in a survey around broadband provision and it was suggested that businesses in the county should be pointed to this survey and encouraged to take part.
- The subject of Broadband/4G/5G etc will form a substantive agenda item at the next Board meeting. An expert in the field would be invited to attend the meeting to brief the board on the opportunities available. This discussion would also consider the likely cost to provide 100% coverage to the county and funding sources available.

3.4 AVDC/SEMLEP

- With the change in Leadership and portfolio responsibilities at AVDC, it was reported that a full review was underway into AVDC's membership of two LEPs; BTVLEP and SEMLEP.
- AVDC Cabinet Members and Scrutiny Chairs would seek presentations from both LEPs in December.
- As LEPs are business-led entities the views of the local business community were considered very important and, as the council was operating to a tight timescale, it was suggested that Bucks Business First could provide a clear business view, given the 1200 AVDC businesses within its membership, and its strong collective voice arrangements with business representative organisations.

3.5 39 LEPs

- Work progress on reconstituting the LEP Network at the end of its current contract, in part to ensure that the new organisation carried a direct mandate from the 39 LEPs in negotiations with Whitehall.
- It has been proposed that all 39 LEPs will provide a small amount of funding, to be matched by CLG, to provide a fit for purpose function able to lobby on behalf of the 39 LEPs on issues of collective concern.
- LEP Chairs continued to push for meetings with Whitehall departments to ensure proper engagement.
- As the general election nears it was thought the "invest in success" message would need to be pushed increasingly hard if attention was not to be drawn solely into rebalancing the economy. There were several LEPs in the same position as the BTVLEP in wishing to promote this message and this might best be achieved by these LEPs coming together.
- It was felt the advent of the LEP had facilitated 'Team Bucks' working together far more successfully to marshal and direct existing resources, with particular regard for infrastructure and skills projects.

4 **STRATEGIC ECONOMIC PLAN (SEP) UPDATE**

- The BTVLEP had submitted its high level SEP update to government on 25 October.
- Work would now progress on producing a detailed proposition populated with project analysis and a clear framework for growth, to be submitted mid-December. The final submission being due in April 2014 and being assessed between April and June, with funding being allocated for 2015 onwards.
- The BTVLEP has been allocated €13.9m of the EU Structural and Investment Funds. This amount will need to be covered locally and recovered at project conclusion from the EU. It was thought that further funding may become available to those utilising their EU allocations quickly and efficiently.

5 CHIEF EXECUTIVE UPDATE

5.1 Highways Agency Funding - 2015-2021

- Board members noted the report provided with the Board papers regarding Highways Agency funding of £15bn available over the period 2015-2021. This funding related primarily to nationally important strategic road improvements.

5.2 LEP Delivery Mechanism

- The draft Members' Agreement and Articles were in the process of being reviewed by Local Authority legal teams and Bucks Business First (as the 6 Members of the proposed organisation) with a view to gaining final agreements prior to submission of the BTVLEP's SEP in mid-December.
- The Objects of the delivery mechanism would reflect the objectives within the Strategic Economic Plan, binding the BTVLEP and the delivery vehicle closely together.
- The Member organisations of the delivery vehicle would have the responsibility for appointment of the delivery vehicle Board of directors.

6 SUB GROUP UPDATES

6.1 Skills Sub Group

- The work/agenda of the Skills Sub Group had been closely reflected in the priorities for inclusion in the Strategic Economic Plan being prepared.
- The introduction of the Waterside University would provide a focus on cyber security and telehealth sectors; supplementing the work being undertaken in the south of the county around the Creative Industries and focussing on Film, Visual Effects and Games.

6.2 Infrastructure Sub Group

- The inaugural meeting, post signing of the contract to deliver the BDUK Broadband project, had been held with BT. It was anticipated that ground would be broken in January 2014 on this and work continued to ensure that the best value for money possible (within a monopoly situation) was being achieved.
- Discussions were underway with regards to how to take Broadband coverage from 90-100%. It was anticipated funding could be found to move from 90-95% coverage but that the final 5% to connect the more difficult to reach, rural areas, would prove to be very expensive; although technological advancement in the next few years may ease this path.
- Funding to continue Broadband work was being sought through bids to the EU and via the Case Conference ask for early release of TV Licence payers funds. It was recognised that it was important to confirm plans/funding available in the immediate term so that additional work might be scheduled to coincide with the BT project development.

7 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Friday 13 December 2013, from 9.30am, McAfee Inc, Target House, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury HP19 8ED.