

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

Held Friday 13 December 2013 from 9.30am at  
McAfee, Target House, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, Bucks HP19 8ED

**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  
Philippa Batting, Buckinghamshire Business First (Alternate)  
Guy Lachlan, Buckinghamshire Business First (Jones & Cocks Ltd)  
Alex Pratt, Buckinghamshire Business First (Serious Brands)  
David Pritchard, Buckinghamshire Business First (Penningtons Manches LLP) (Alternate)

**Apologies:** Ruth Farwell, Buckinghamshire Business First (Bucks New University)  
Michael Garvey, Buckinghamshire Business First (Stupples Chandler Garvey)  
Andrew Smith, Buckinghamshire Business First (Pinewood)

**In attendance:** Graham Strachan, McAfee (Part meeting)  
Rahim Tafazolli, University of Surrey (Part meeting)  
Keith Robson, University of Surrey (Part meeting)  
David Hendon, University of Surrey (Part meeting)  
Richard Harrington, BTVLEP Chief Executive  
Warren Ralls, BTVLEP Partnerships Manager  
Jim Sims, BTVLEP Development Manager  
Paula Buck, Service Director, Bucks County Council  
Sarah Fraser

## **MINUTES**

### **1 BROADBAND DEVELOPMENT AND 5G**

- The Board received a presentation on the evolution, economic impacts, and the anticipated uses of Broadband/5G in the future, and the development of the 5G test bed in Surrey; digital connectivity being identified by all the LEPs across the country as being key to growth.
- The benefits of 5G were outlined as being around the impression of “infinite capacity”; increased speed of working; and the integration of a “network or networks” improving mobile coverage exponentially, irrespective of callers’ providers.
- The University of Surrey, the only centre in the UK undertaking a 5G pilot and developing this work, aims to leverage private sector vs public sector investment in the project at a ratio of around 5:1.
- The Board delegated authority to Richard Harrington (supported by Warren Ralls) to progress discussions with the University of Surrey, the other GTV6 LEPs, and private companies to gain further understanding of the 5G test bed proposal and the most appropriate funding model, with the proviso that Bucks receives increased profile and there is direct benefit to the county as a result of the project in the event that the BTVLEP supports this work.
- The BTVLEP Strategic Economic Plan states that access to superfast broadband across the county is essential to growth.
- The University of Surrey confirmed separately that LEP support would be crucial to achieving the necessary scale to deliver the project, and to competing with other regions in the world.

## 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/BOARD MEMBERSHIP

- There were no new declarations of interest at this meeting.
- Rob Spurrett had stepped down due to increased work commitments that would make it difficult for him to attend future Board meetings. His place had been taken by Guy Lachlan, who both lives and owns a business in Aylesbury Vale, to maintain the geographic spread on the Board.

## 3 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 1 November 2013

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

### 3.1 Matters Arising

- 3.1.1 • **GTV6 and 5G Project** – It was confirmed there is little ability to bid to EU funding under the banner of social inclusion criteria to support broadband provision, as it would be very difficult to create a direct link between the two.
- 3.1.2 • **Item 5 - Strategic Economic Plan** - Central government had recently decided to remove New Homes Bonus money from the Local Growth Deal funds in 2015/16, having been heavily lobbied by Local Authorities. The gap left in the Single Local Growth Fund 'pot' will be filled by Regional Growth Fund and Housing Resource Account monies, neither of which will benefit Bucks as they are pre allocated or targeted at Local Authorities with housing stock. A comparatively small amount of funding, totalling £50m nationally, is available to open up major housing sites; this may offer opportunities for Bucks.

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

## 4 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

### 4.1 AVDC/LEP Overlap

- BTVLEP representatives had met with AVDC/SEMLEP representatives on Monday 9 December to discuss how to manage shared LEP geography.
- It had been suggested that:
  - BTVLEP handle transport and business support matters, bidding for funding and delivering projects.
  - SEMLEP lead on delivery of the local contribution to East West Rail costs.
  - Where government is providing funding for development projects to BTVLEP/SEMLEP (and potentially other LEPs, eg Silverstone) that support will be sought in proportions at least equal to the distribution of funding.
- Work is underway to ensure the Strategic Economic Plans (SEPs) for SEMLEP and BTVLEP are as aligned as possible with regards to the overlapping geography prior to submission.
- The alignment of SEP plans around AVDC projects and priorities aside, the competitive nature of the bidding process was highlighted and the need for commercially sensitive information to remain confidential to BTVLEP Board members was emphasised.
- The Board acknowledged the added complexity and work involved in having to create a SEP partly in partnership. It was agreed to review the situation after feedback on the first round of bids had been received. If indications from BIS/CLG were that our local economy would lose out as a result of the overlap then further thought would be required.
- Bucks is not alone locally, nor nationally, in having to accommodate overlapping geography (although the proportion of overlap is greater in Bucks than other places).
- The final decision re AVDC's LEP memberships would be taken at the AVDC Cabinet meeting on 16 December and the outcome of discussions would be confirmed thereafter.

### 4.2 Department for Transport

- In a recent meeting DfT representatives had emphasised the need for simplicity and strategic thinking in SEPs; the biggest plea being that LEPs be in a position to deliver on items contained within their bids.

#### 4.3 39 LEPs

- A meeting has been arranged for the 39 LEPs with Rt Hon Greg Clark MP on 21 January. The pulling together of the 39 provides a strong voice to lobby central government on issues of common interest.
- A subset of the 39 LEPs is being formed (the “Blind Spot” LEPs) which will likely commission research to start making the case that there is no legitimate evidence base to support over-investment in cities. This subject will be brought back to a future Board meeting.

#### 5 **STRATEGIC ECONOMIC PLAN (SEP) SUBMISSION**

- The SEP focusses on those areas where Bucks might successfully forward a bid; transport, infrastructure, access to GPF monies, loan and development finance in order to progress commercial property deals, affordable housing, business support, peer to peer lending, grants to high growth business programmes etc. The SEP also outlines wider projects that may not be funded from the ‘pots’ available but indicates that these are items important to Bucks’ growth.
- The detail of some of the transport schemes to be supported under the SEP will be included within the appendices to be sent to central government.
- The full outline SEP document will be sent to the Board around 16 December prior to submission to Government by close of play on 19 December. The Board were reminded that this submission would still be at draft stage; the final document due by the end of March 2014.

#### 6 **EU STRUCTURAL AND INVESTMENT FUNDS 2014-2020**

- The feedback received was considered to be very positive overall.
- The process/methodology by which projects will be commissioned will now be identified. The Board recognised the need for early engagement with a range of stakeholders.
- The Board agreed the creation of a Local European Investment Framework Implementation Group to oversee review and recommendation of projects; the group to be populated as appropriate.

#### 7 **CHIEF EXECUTIVE UPDATE**

##### 7.1 Autumn Statement

- The replacement of the New Homes Bonus element of the SLGF with pre-allocated RGF money and housing revenue funds, was recognised as being disadvantageous to areas such as Bucks. The £50m funding available to open up large development sites being of more interest.
- The replacement of the NHB element with funding streams that Bucks and other areas were ineligible to bid to was felt to be inequitable. It was agreed to write to central government to highlight this.

##### 7.2 LEP Delivery Mechanism

- The majority of Member organisations have now committed to establishment of Bucks Advantage, subject to approval of the final constitution document. The company will be launched in February 2014, which will provide the necessary governance structure to accompany the final SEP submission.
- Local Authority Officers and BBF’s Managing Director were meeting as the shadow Bucks Advantage Board and progress was being made with regards to the appointment of independent private sector directors, prior to the launch of the company in February. The strategic direction for Bucks Advantage will be set by the BTVLEP Board.

##### 7.3 Bucks-wide Energy Strategy

- It was reported that Bucks County Council are seeking to create an energy strategy for the entirety of Bucks and had asked for participation from the BTVLEP in this process via a planned workshop.

##### 7.4 Real Estate Investment Trust

- Discussions had been held with the HCA etc about the establishment of a REIT in Bucks. Two financial models were being reviewed and a script had been prepared to take to the local business community.

## 7.5 Skills

- It was agreed a proposal would be prepared for the next Board meeting around a jointly funded post with Buckinghamshire New University to undertake a specific schools-orientated project, to start the process of closer engagement with schools.

## 8 **SUB GROUP UPDATES**

### 8.1 Skills Sub Group

- The news of the removal of the student cap announced in the Autumn Statements, and as requested at the Bucks Case Conference, was welcomed. Further discussions on this would be held with BIS once remit letters had been received in order to progress the apprenticeships programme.
- Work is underway to bring providers together to work more efficiently and make better use of skills funding available to ensure that providers are meeting the needs of Bucks' businesses.
- Funding for apprenticeships has been increased, this money now flowing through employers. Brokerage models are being drawn up to bring local businesses much closer to schools and colleges.
- Lord Young has offered to host a dinner at Number 10 to discuss how to get business more involved with schools, from primary education upwards, and has invited the BTVLEP to be involved with this.

## 9 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### 9.1 Economic Bulletins

- Economic bulletins (at Ward level) are in the process of being produced for all Wards across Bucks including information, for example, on the number of businesses in each patch, employment rates, deprivation, age profiles, educational attainment etc. Once produced these bulletins will be forwarded to Board members for onward despatch to the relevant councillors.

## 10 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Friday 24 January 2014, from 9.30am, venue tbc.