

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE THAMES VALLEY LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP (BTVLEP) BOARD MEETING

Held Thursday 24 May 2018 from 10.30am at Pinewood Studios, Pinewood Road, Iver Heath, Bucks SLO ONH

Present: Cllr Steve Bowles, Aylesbury Vale District Council
Cllr Isobel Darby, Chiltern District Council
Cllr John Reed, South Bucks District Council (Alternate)
Cllr Martin Tett, Buckinghamshire County Council
Cllr Katrina Wood, Wycombe District Council
Rebecca Bunting, Buckinghamshire Business First (Buckinghamshire New University)
Hiren Gandhi, Buckinghamshire Business First (Blaser Mills) (Alternate)
Alistair Lomax, Buckinghamshire Business First (University of Buckingham) (Alternate)
Andrew Smith, Buckinghamshire Business First (Pinewood)
Adam Stronach, Buckinghamshire Business First (Harwood Hutton)

Apologies: Cllr Nick Naylor, South Bucks District Council
Michael Garvey, Buckinghamshire Business First (Chandler Garvey)
Eman Martin-Vignerte, Buckinghamshire Business First (Bosch)

In attendance: Nick Arthurton, Chiltern Railways (Part meeting)
David Heathfield, Chiltern Railways (Part meeting)
Richard Turl, BEIS South Central & West
Richard Ambrose, Buckinghamshire County Council
Philippa Batting, BBF Managing Director
Richard Harrington, BTVLEP Chief Executive
Ian Barham, BTVLEP Partnerships Manager
Jackie Campbell, BTVLEP Skills Development Manager
Sarah Fraser

SUMMARY MINUTES

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- There were no new declarations of interest at this meeting.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING - 23 March 2018

- The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

2.1 Matters arising:

- **Eastern Link Road South** - Final sign off has been achieved on this project.

3 CHILTERN RAILWAYS

- The Board received an update on Chiltern Railways plans for investment into the rail network and for addressing opportunities and challenges presented by increased passenger numbers and the capacity restrictions at Marylebone station.
- The current franchise runs until 2021 and during its tenure the franchisee has invested significantly in the network. However, meeting infrastructure requirements of planned housing growth to 2033 will require substantial continued investment.

- Chiltern Railways would like to work with BTVLEP and Local Authorities in looking at how to increase car parking available to enable more rail passengers to use the network, and as part of this exercise will look at the availability of electric vehicle charging points.
- The company is looking at opportunities offered through the planned development at Old Oak Common; the inclusion of Chiltern Railways at this interchange would relieve pressure on Marylebone and offer passengers new journeys/connections not currently available.
- Chiltern Railways has lobbied hard with support from LEPs, Local Authorities and the England's Economic Heartland team to protect the route into the interchange and are developing the business case to develop the connection proposals.
- The benefits of the new connection will fall into 3 areas: capacity, choice and speed of journey. In particular, it was anticipated the links to Heathrow that could be provided through the interchange will offer passengers a real alternative to driving to the airport, relieving road congestion.
- With the current franchise ending in 2021, the Board questioned the business model for enabling capital funding to achieve the plans outlined. It was suggested investment will need to come from both public and private sources and that advance planning is essential to support service continuity and the long term growth of the franchise service.
- In addition to the work looking at Old Oak Common, it was noted Chiltern Railways will be looking to increase capacity on the single train line from Aylesbury to Princes Risborough.
- **Recognising there may be implications for the LIS in terms of improving productivity, the Board endorsed the BTVLEP executive team working with Chiltern Railways to lobby for a full feasibility study (to include looking at the implications for all existing services) and business case to be prepared in respect of the potential around a dedicated Chiltern Railways platform at the Old Oak Common interchange.**

4 LOCAL INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY UPDATE

- The Board noted the report provided on preparation of the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS), designed to run to 2050.
- BTVLEP is working with Government and neighbouring LEPs and will jointly commission a cross corridor visioning document with SEMLEP, OXLEP and Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Mayoral Combined Authority; agreement has been reached on prioritisation 'cross-patch'. Consultants to be appointed by end June to undertake this work.
- Interviews to appoint consultants to assist in development of the Buckinghamshire LIS will take place on 25 May; with an inception meeting to be held on 1 June.
- The Board suggested: reviewing the proposed timetable for approval of the LIS; looking at expanding references to AI and consider how this technology might impact everyday life in Bucks; looking at how catapults can play a greater part in economic growth; including greater reference to the rural economy.
- **The Board endorsed the approach being taken, noting the sectoral element outlined and that the strategy will align with work being undertaken on transport and place projects; agreed the timescale outlined (with the above caveat); and empowered the executive team to look at appropriate themes, developing a LIS that is really "Bucks relevant".**

5 BTVLEP INCORPORATION

- The LEP Review, which is still to report, will likely see a requirement for unincorporated LEPs to incorporate, becoming companies limited by guarantee.
- **The Board agreed the establishment of a task and finish group to look at how to shape incorporation of the BTVLEP and the structures around this, but felt it might be counterproductive to undertake too much work on this subject until the outcomes of the LEP Review have been published and endorsed by Ministers.**

6 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

6.1 Aylesbury Garden Town

- The BTVLEP executive team and Board representative, NN, will be encouraging a focus on the local economy through discussions at Project Board meetings.
- Board members agreed the "Garden Town" nomenclature was unhelpful and that the focus should be on "Smart Towns/Smart Cities".
- Further to discussion at the last BTVLEP Board meeting, it was confirmed development at Halton village has been linked closely with development of the Aylesbury Garden Town.

6.2 Skills Board Update

- Information was shared on an opportunity to gain additional support for skills in Buckinghamshire in the form of a follow up bid to the Careers and Enterprise Company to establish a new 'Careers Hub'.
- The bid is for £120k to support a full time post for 2 years delivering additional support to schools; the outcome of the bid is expected by the end of June, with the requirement that the 'Hub' is up and running by September.
- **The Board endorsed the application for additional funding and agreed to forward a letter of support for this submission to the Careers and Enterprise Company.**

6.3 Local Growth Fund

- The last year has been the most successful for BTVLEP in terms of committing expenditure, the release of funding for Eastern Link Road South (as above) placing BTVLEP ahead of profiled spending.
- The executive will approach Government with a view to securing any additional funding available and will endeavour to be innovative in how funding is leveraged going forward. It was suggested having an agreed LIS in place will be key to Government's future investment strategy, and confirmed Government is increasingly taking a more active role in assessing LEP performance, generally seeking to improve deliverability of projects rather than reallocating funding.
- LGF funding granted to ATG (Aylesbury Training Group) has been reclaimed as the organisation has now moved out of county to become part of a bigger training group.

6.4 Buckinghamshire Energy Strategy

- The BTVLEP received funding at the end of 2017 from BEIS to develop a local Energy Strategy to sit within the Local Industrial Strategy. The existing Buckinghamshire Energy Strategy, developed in 2015, will be used as the basis for this work, and updated in liaison with Local Authorities, Distribution Network Operators (DNOs) and consultants, to look at both how this maps with local growth, and how clean growth can be achieved.
- The updated Energy Strategy will be brought to the BTVLEP Board in July.

6.5 Growth Hub

- Growth Hub funding has been confirmed for 2018/19. The Growth Hub is delivering an additional £2.5m of growth and support to business on top of the £250k investment. It is critical that core funding is maintained if the county is to retain this additional £2.5m.
- The performance of the Growth Hub is currently being evaluated by Regeneris.

6.6 Digital Strategy

- Over 95% of Buckinghamshire now has access to superfast broadband and, as previously reported, the county has one of the highest take up rates in the country. There is now a dedicated resource in place, working closely with BBF, to support broadband connectivity across the county. Despite this, some businesses have reported issues with broadband speeds, both download and upload.
- It is intended that there will be a specific "Digital" theme in the LIS.

- The Board suggested greater focus is needed on mobile connectivity; 5G announcements are due soon and it is likely there will be a future national requirement on providers to ensure 90% coverage by geography. There may be opportunities to work with organisations looking at innovative solutions to these issues, eg reuse of Digital TV space.
- The outstanding 5% of harder to reach areas in Buckinghamshire with no access to superfast Broadband remain an area of concern for the Board, particularly where the lack of access affects business productivity.
- RH undertook to feed the Board's comments back to the Digital Infrastructure Group and provide information to the Board on mobile connectivity rates.

6.7 CIPFA Consultation Response

- A response to the consultation on the relationship between Section 151 Officers and LEPs will be forwarded prior to 30 May closing date. BTVLEP is in a good position on this front, has a robust framework in place, and received good feedback at the Annual Conversation with Government.
- The Board will consider whether incorporation might affect this relationship and greater clarity around the Monitoring Officer role would be useful.

6.8 Enterprise Zone Update

- Development at the Enterprise Zone sites is progressing well.

6.9 LEP Network

- Ben Golding, Director of Home and Local Energy, has been confirmed as the new BTVLEP Sponsor.

6.10 Communications

- The executive team is progressing work on the Annual Report and are in the process of developing a new BTVLEP website with greatly improved functionality. Board members were asked to forward any feedback on the new website to the executive team.

7 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- **Tuesday** 24 July 2018, 9.30am, Greatmoor Energy From Waste Plant, Woodham. To be followed 1-3pm by a meeting on the Local Industrial Strategy.