

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

Held Friday 4 July 2014 from 9.30am at
The Clare Charity Centre, Wycombe Road, Saunderton, Bucks HP14 4BF

Present: Cllr Neil Blake, Aylesbury Vale District Council
Cllr Adrian Busby, South Bucks District Council
Cllr Isobel Darby, Chiltern District Council
Cllr Hugh McCarthy, Wycombe District Council (Alternate)
Cllr Martin Tett, Buckinghamshire County Council
Philippa Batting, Buckinghamshire Business First (Alternate)
Ruth Farwell, Buckinghamshire Business First (Bucks New University)
Michael Garvey, Buckinghamshire Business First (Stupples Chandler Garvey)
Alex Pratt, Buckinghamshire Business First (Serious Brands)
Andrew Smith, Buckinghamshire Business First (Pinewood)

Apologies: Cllr Richard Scott, Wycombe District Council
Guy Lachlan, Buckinghamshire Business First (Jones & Cocks Ltd)

In attendance: David Briggs, Chilterns LEADER LAG Chair (Part meeting)
Nick Phillips, AVMK and Chilterns LEADER Programme Manager (Part meeting)
Richard Harrington, BTVLEP Chief Executive
Jim Sims, BTVLEP Development Manager
Sarah Fraser

SUMMARY MINUTES

1 LEADER PROGRAMME

- Information had been provided on the LEADER programme which was reported to be in transition prior to commencement of the new programme in January 2015.
- New funding will be used to support local projects similar to those in previous rounds; funding granted being matched by the businesses supported.
- It was agreed:
 - BTVLEP would look at the possibility of providing business support capacity, via Buckinghamshire Business First, to assist business owners in the LEADER application process.
 - BTVLEP would share intelligence on how EAFRD funding was to be utilised to avoid duplication.
 - The Chilterns LAG would continue discussions with Colne Valley LAG to come to a positive outcome around overlapping geography; and DEFRA would be informed of this.
 - The LAGs would provide detail on the difficulties accessing funding so that the BTVLEP/LEP Network might take this case to DEFRA.

(David Briggs and Nick Phillips left the meeting)

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 9 May 2014

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

3.1 Matters arising

- **Item 2.1 - SEMLEP/BTVLEP MOU** - In discussion with SEMLEP re the MoU in place, SEMLEP had indicated no wish to revise this currently to reflect agreed arrangements on the ground.
- **Item 3 - SEP Update** - Governance and assurance arrangements will be revisited at the September Board meeting, once the implications of the Growth Deal announcements have been assessed.
- **Item 11.1 - Creative England** - The Chief Executive of Creative England to be invited to attend a future Board meeting to investigate areas of mutual interest.

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

4 **SKILLS SUB GROUP UPDATE**

- The Skills Sub Group is working on trying to bring about better alignment of skills provision with the current and future needs of employers.
- Recent reports have indicated employers are concerned about the lack of communication, numeracy, and problem-solving skills displayed by young people, with 6/10 employers (CBI survey) believing that the skills gap is getting worse not better.
- The Board were supportive of the need to make quick progress in the skills area, in particular facilitating far greater engagement between businesses and schools/colleges (a wish echoed by young people in the Bucks Youth Parliament); and dispelling the myth that apprenticeships equate to “slave labour” - something that is being addressed through the Going for Gold apprenticeships project.
- It was agreed to investigate the costs of implementing recommendations in the Lord Young report and the BCC Select Committee report and bring this back to the next Board meeting for further discussion.

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

- The Growth Deal announcements planned for Monday 7 July would launch a significant communications campaign over the next few weeks. In large part the SEPs submitted were thought by the departments whose budgets would be called upon to be wholly sensible, realistic and deliverable.
- No commitment has been made passed 2015/16 but there appears to be a move from all Parties on the reallocation of the major strategic budgets to do with the economy.
- Individual contractual Growth Deal Agreements are awaited but government has indicated it wishes to see private sector leverage, jobs and increased floor space delivered through the Growth Deals.
- Outside the Growth Deal arrangements Bucks is due to receive £360k ESF funding and £350k Growth Hub funding which may allow some of the negotiated asks not met in the Growth Deal to be funded.
- It was confirmed £20m of additional Public Works Loan Board funding would be made available in 2015/16. BTVLEP will utilise this facility to fund the Aylesbury Stocklake Link Road (rural section). This is a consented scheme, private sector led and backed by main company guarantee.
- With regards to the new supply of private rented housing, it was confirmed no targets or restrictions had been imposed by government but funding had come with the request that the BTVLEP demonstrate the ability to get private sector funding.
- A session will be held at the September Board meeting around delivery.
- The impact of budget cuts on Local Authorities' resources was recognised, making it ever more important to work as Team Bucks to avoid duplication, share capacity and ensure delivery on the promises in the SEP.

6 **EUROPEAN STRUCTURAL AND INVESTMENT FUNDS UPDATE**

- The European Commission have informed Managing Authorities they cannot delegate decisions on investment to LEPs.
- The Local Investment Committees created (with wider membership than on the LEP Boards) will provide representation into the Programme Monitoring Committee (aka the National Growth Board), with no facility for LEPs subsequently to veto recommendations made.

- Board members supported the establishment of the BTVLEP ESIF Committee on the basis of the paper presented (with the possible inclusion of a member of the Natural Environment Partnership) on the understanding the committee would reference closely the BTVLEP strategy in its deliberations.

7 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

7.1 Bucks Advantage (BA)

- The BA directors have met for the first time and started thinking about BA's agenda going forward. It was agreed to invite the BA Chairman to the September BTVLEP Board meeting to talk about delivery.

7.2 Lord Heseltine

- A briefing session had been held with Lord Heseltine and DWP representatives on the BTVLEP pilot project looking at assisting the long term unemployed and hard to reach groups back into employment. Discussions about how to fund this project, which is part of the Growth Deal, are still being finalised but it is anticipated there will be no requirement for Bucks to find match funding.
- The "Tomorrow's People" group have been doing significant work for a long time in getting young people into work and it was suggested they may be able to assist with the pilot project.

7.3 Superfast Broadband Extension

- A bid for additional funding had been submitted to the broadband extension programme.
- A detailed report is being prepared and will be forwarded to Local Authority partners by the end of July for discussion at full council meetings re match funding.

7.4 MPs Briefing Session - 20 June 2014

- The MPs Briefing Session held had focussed on the Tourism sector and aligning possible opportunities. This subject would be brought to the September BTVLEP Board meeting.
- It was agreed it would be useful to review the asks made of government in terms of mitigating the impact of HS2 on Bucks. In particular, it was felt there was a need to reinforce the message that Bucks wishes to see local delivery of relevant skills training within the county.

7.5 Combined Authority/Economic Prosperity Board Consultation

- The BTVLEP had not submitted a response to this DCLG consultation; Buckinghamshire Business First and a number of the Local Authorities had.
- The BTVLEP executive team were asked to look at the responses forwarded to DCLG and highlight any differences or similarities.

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

8.1 UKTI

- UKTI will be announcing on 24 July a new strategy on funding in the creative industries and officials would be visiting Pinewood Studios to see how small businesses will benefit.

9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Friday 5 September 2014, from 9.30am at Sivatech, Gatehouse Close, Aylesbury HP19 8DJ.