

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

Held Friday 5 September 2014 from 9.30am at  
Sivatech Business Solutions Ltd, Gatehouse Close, Aylesbury, Bucks HP19 8DJ

**Present:** Cllr Neil Blake, Aylesbury Vale District Council  
Cllr Adrian Busby, South Bucks District Council  
Cllr Isobel Darby, Chiltern District Council  
Cllr Richard Scott, Wycombe District Council  
Cllr Martin Tett, Buckinghamshire County Council  
Elizabeth Adlington, Buckinghamshire Business First (Waterside Theatre) (Alternate)  
Ruth Farwell, Buckinghamshire Business First (Bucks New University)  
Michael Garvey, Buckinghamshire Business First (Stupples Chandler Garvey)  
Guy Lachlan, Buckinghamshire Business First (Jones & Cocks Ltd)  
Alex Pratt, Buckinghamshire Business First (Serious Brands)

**Apologies:** Andrew Smith, Buckinghamshire Business First (Pinewood)

**In attendance:** Adrian Brown, Bucks Advantage  
Philippa Batting, Buckinghamshire Business First  
Richard Harrington, BTVLEP Chief Executive  
Warren Ralls, BTVLEP Partnerships Manager  
Jim Sims, BTVLEP Development Manager  
Sarah Fraser

## **SUMMARY MINUTES**

### **1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- Guy Lachlan declared that Ringway Jacobs (a prime contractor for Bucks County Council) are a customer of Jones & Cocks Ltd.

### **2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 4 July 2014**

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

### **3 TOURISM SECTOR OPPORTUNITIES**

- A recent report into opportunities arising from Tourism development highlighted the lack of a clear identity, brand or focus for Bucks as a destination and the benefits that might accrue in terms of economic development through a more coordinated public/private sector approach.
- The Visit Bucks guide managed by Buckinghamshire Business First has promoted individual establishments/events successfully but no 'sense of place' has been developed
- The Tourism sector provides valuable low level skills jobs to balance the greater proliferation of higher level skills jobs available in the county.
- Tourism/Visitor economy has been identified as a growth sector and it is believed there is untapped potential. The ESIF Strategy has referenced the sector but greater collaboration is required if funding is to flow to the county.
- LA Board members agreed to provide information on current resources being expended in this sector, financial and human, to enable production of a business case to be brought back to the next meeting.

#### 4 **SEP UPDATE**

- A detailed paper had been provided prior to the Board meeting.
- Subsequent to announcements on the Local Growth Deal, Government have requested clarity around governance and management arrangements, whilst LEPs also prepare bids for 2016/17 funding.
- Growing pressure was reported on unincorporated LEPs to progress incorporation.
- The Board delegated authority to the BTVLEP Chief Executive to deploy expenditure, within the current budget envelope, to recruit additional resource required to manage increasing governance and project/cash management requirements.
- The Board was unanimous in its desire to avoid 'over-governance' and duplication of effort in respect of the assurance framework, but were equally clear on the need to have robust arrangements in place to ensure proper use of public funds. It was agreed LA Section 151 officers, Chief Executives and the BBF Board Members would be able to provide appropriate oversight that the assurance framework proposed would ensure funding was being deployed appropriately and that value for money was being achieved.
- It was agreed the assurance framework would be reviewed initially through the Buckinghamshire Advantage Board, Section 151 officers and the BBF Board, with the final draft being brought back to the BTVLEP Board meeting on 24 October for approval prior to submission by the end of October.
- The Board felt further investigation was needed in to whether incorporation was an option the BTVLEP wished to pursue.

#### 5 **BUCKINGHAMSHIRE ADVANTAGE**

- The Board welcomed Adrian Brown, Chairman of Buckinghamshire Advantage (BA). BA would have a key role to play in the assessment/management of projects to be supported by the LEP.
- It was reported the BA Board were looking forward to the challenge set and would be aiming to maximise value from projects supported, identifying and removing barriers to delivery, and leveraging additional resource where possible to ensure the best possible outcomes for Bucks.
- The Board requested the assurance framework to be produced detail clearly how the various organisations (BTVLEP, BBF, Bucks Advantage, Local Authorities) sat together and where responsibilities and decision-making authority lay.
- The executive were asked to ensure BTVLEP Board members had clear oversight on discussions being held at the BA board.

#### 6 **2016/17 BIDDING**

- The Board voiced its concerns around the very tight timescales that Government was, once again, asking LEPs to comply with and asked that the executive begin the process now of preparing for future bidding rounds.
- It was agreed that projects not supported in the original Local Growth Deal announcements might provide a useful starting point for creation of the 2016/17 bid submission, although it was acknowledged that these projects would need to be "bundled" appropriately and a clear picture of national significance painted if they were to be successful. In addition, a call for new projects would be issued.
- The executive were asked to pursue agreement with SEMLEP as a matter of urgency on arrangements within the AVDC overlap area.
- The Board approved the evaluation criteria and process for collation, assessment and recommendation of projects previously circulated.

#### 7 **GROWING PLACES FUND (GPF)**

- The Board requested the executive progress draw down/return of monies committed in the initial GPF funding round to enable this funding to be recycled.
- The Board agreed to include a call for future GPF projects in the 2016/17 call for projects and to assess any submissions using the same framework; recommendations to come to the Board on 24 October.

## 8 SKILLS SUB GROUP UPDATE

- Following discussion at the last Board meeting information had been provided within the Board papers around the quantum needed to make progress immediately in those skills areas that would have a direct impact on economic development.
- The funding gap identified was in the region of £200k and it was possible that none of the projects to be supported would fit with the call for the 2016/17 bid for nationally significant projects (although if successful projects could be extended and promoted nationally).
- The work of the BTVLEP would dovetail with that being carried out by Bucks County Council.
- Board members were supportive of the need to make progress in the skills area quickly and approved a recycled GPF allocation of up to £200k to progress the tabled skills priority list; the projects being appraised in line with the GPF/2016-17 bidding process approved previously. Efforts would be made to leverage additional funds towards replenishment of the GPF fund.

## 9 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

### 9.1 Broadband

- Whilst budgetary pressures were noted for Local Authorities it was suggested that if Bucks was unable to take advantage of the 70% subsidy being offered through the Superfast Extension Plan, bearing in mind the importance of this to businesses and residents, it would be very difficult to justify requesting additional support for digital investment in the future.
- BT's rollout would bring superfast broadband to 70% of premises in the county. The BDUK project extended this coverage to around 90% but beyond this it became increasingly more expensive to connect harder to reach premises. This was considered both a social inclusion and economic development issue if businesses are to compete in a global economy.
- It was noted that DEFRA had indicated that ERDF funding could be used towards the cost of Broadband connectivity and this would be factored into the cost model being presented.

### 9.2 Silverstone

- The executive were asked to ensure close liaison between the LEPs with an interest in Silverstone to avoid any duplication of effort and to make sure of a co-ordinated approach with regard to the Local Development Order being progressed.

## 10 CHAIR REPORT

### 10.1 Blind Spot LEPs

- As previously discussed the 'Blind Spot LEPs' had come together to attempt to counter policy focus in central government on the North and major cities to the detriment of non-metropolitan areas, which is not supported by the evidence available. The group has proposed establishing a 'fighting fund' to enable, amongst other things, research to be commissioned identifying the flaws in policy thinking.
- The Board agreed that £10k be made available nominally, to be committed on a project by project basis as required, on the understanding that any projects commissioned would not duplicate work already undertaken by the Peace Commission, SEEC etc but would seek to pull this all together ensuring the message is delivered to the right Ministers and is referenced in the correct publications.

## 11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Friday 24 October 2014, from 9.30am at Green Dragon Rare Breeds Farm, Claydon Road, Hogshaw, Bucks MK18 3LA.