

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

Held Friday 9 May 2014 from 9.30am at
Buckinghamshire New University, Queen Alexandra Road, High Wycombe, Bucks HP11 2JZ

Present: Cllr Sue Polhill, Aylesbury Vale District Council (Alternate)
Cllr Roger Reed, South Bucks District Council (Alternate)
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)
Guy Lachlan, Buckinghamshire Business First (Jones & Cocks Ltd)
Alex Pratt, Buckinghamshire Business First (Serious Brands)

Apologies: Cllr Neil Blake, Aylesbury Vale District Council
Cllr Adrian Busby, South Bucks District Council
Andrew Smith, Buckinghamshire Business First (Pinewood)

In attendance: Cllr Isobel Darby, Chiltern District Council
Henry Overman, What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth
Hannah Carmichael, BIS South Central & West
Keri Torney, BIS South Central & West
Toni Wootton, BIS South Central & West
Alison Porter, LEP Network
Richard Harrington, BTVLEP Chief Executive
Warren Ralls, BTVLEP Partnerships Manager
Jim Sims, BTVLEP Development Manager
Sarah Fraser

SUMMARY MINUTES

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- Cllr Nick Rose declared an interest in discussions concerning the LEADER project.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 14 March 2014

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

3 STRATEGIC ECONOMIC PLAN (SEP) UPDATE

- The feedback received on the BTVLEP's submission had been positive. Work was now needed to align resources to ensure delivery of projects in the SEP, within the timescales defined.
- Announcements from Government re most of the growth deals will be made in July 2014; announcements around the wider 'negotiated asks' will likely take longer.
- It was suggested LEPs convincing Government of their ability to deliver projects through partnership working, providing the greatest level of assurance are more likely to be given greater flexibilities etc.
- Government are unable to make financial commitments beyond 2015/16 due to the planned general election; but it is believed the main political parties will continue to support the work of the LEPs.
- The SEP 'pot' has been significantly over-subscribed, as expected. The level to which local priorities had not been clearly identified in individual SEPs had not been expected and this was being reviewed.
- No area will receive a nil allocation from the Local Growth Fund as half the 'pot' is to be allocated, the other half being the subject of competition.

- Work will be undertaken through Bucks Advantage over the coming weeks to ensure partners are clear on what is required and that resources are being aligned to ensure delivery of projects; deliverability being critical in maintaining Government's confidence.
- In future a system of multi-year allocations will likely be operated and discussions will take place to implement appropriate processes to allow this to happen. This will allow localities to tie up thinking between their SEPs and the Local Plans being drawn up over a much longer time frame.
- It was agreed that the Skills Project Board would be included within those groups having oversight on delivery of projects contained within the SEP.

4 **COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE**

- The communications focus in the coming weeks will be around ensuring partners are aware of the contents of the SEP and the need to operate as 'Team Bucks' to deliver the projects outlined therein.
- The Board recognised that the BTVLEP benefitted greatly from being so closely aligned with the business community, thanks to the work undertaken by Buckinghamshire Business First.
- The BTVLEP team will liaise with Local Authority Members on wider council membership engagement.

5 **WHAT WORKS CENTRE FOR LOCAL ECONOMIC GROWTH**

- The What Works Centre is focussed on trying to increase the use of evidence in the formulation of policy, with particular focus on evaluation, and assisting in building capacity within LEPs.
- The need to look wider than current LEP boundaries was emphasised; it was thought this would be particularly pertinent should there be a change in government at the next election.
- The work of the Peace Commission, looking at potential for growth in areas other than cities and the obstacles constraining this growth, was outlined.

6 **LEP NETWORK**

- The Board were introduced to the new LEP Network Chief Executive and were given an overview of her immediate priorities.

7 **LEADER BIDDING PROCESS**

- It was agreed the BTVLEP Board should meet the LEADER Board to look at areas of mutual interest. This applied also to the Natural Environment Partnership, and Voluntary & Community Sector.
- The Board asked for further information around the governance of the LEADER funding but assuming appropriate governance mechanisms were in place the Board were minded to support the revised LEADER geographies proposed in the paper previously circulated.

8 **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

8.1 Unitary Research

- It was noted that Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF) and Local Authorities would be responding to government's consultation on Combined Authorities.
- The Board were aware that BBF would be raising crowd funding to enable independent research to be carried out on possible options for local government structures/the pitfalls and benefits associated with these. This research would not seek to provide a solution but merely to inform the debate.
- The Board were keen to avoid duplication of effort as Authorities were undertaking their own work looking at local government structures and indicated the wish to work with BBF on this subject.

8.2 National Planning Summit

- The mismatch between HM Treasury's belief that Planning is constraining growth vs others' view that it is the pre-funding infrastructure that causes issues was discussed, and it was noted that this was something the LEP Network would be taking forward.

9 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

9.1 Growing Places Fund

- The Board were reminded that decisions re recycling GPF money that had already been returned were being delayed pending the outcome of the Local Growth Fund and EU SIF allocations. In the meantime, work was taking place to identify and quantify opportunities arising that might utilise GPF money and this would be brought back to the Board as work progressed.

9.2 EU Structural and Investment Funds

- Buckinghamshire's allocation has been slightly reduced (from 13.9m Euros to 13.8m) but now that the allocation has been set work has begun on looking at the delivery framework and the governance arrangements required to deliver the programme.

9.3 Broadband

- A bid has been submitted to the Superfast Extension Programme for an additional £2.56m funding (with similar match funding required); the source of match funding to be notified by 30 June or the bid will not be progressed.
- Recent figures indicated that this additional funding could extend current coverage to 95% of Bucks; compared with 97/98% coverage for other areas ringing London.
- Further information was requested on roll out plans in order to demonstrate the return that Local Authorities might expect to see on any investment in match funding made; the costs involved; and the subsidy available.

9.4 Bucks Advantage (BA)

- Information will be brought to the July BTVLEP Board on the resource required to support BA in addition to a note of what the BA Board considered to be the organisation's priorities.

9.5 BBF Update - Inward Investment update

- The update provided by BBF displayed good results. Traction has been gained with UKTI but discussion may need to take place around joint funding of a dedicated inward investment resource for the LEP, Local Authorities and BBF.

10 SKILLS SUB GROUP UPDATE

- Work has begun on delivering Skills projects contained within the SEP, drawing down match funding available in advance of receipt of the Local Growth Fund allocation to support this work.
- Skills was recognised as being one of the key challenges for Government and it was hoped for more co-ordination across this agenda, something the LEP Network would push in discussion with Michael Gove.
- It was agreed the Skills Sub Group update would form a substantive item at the next Board meeting.

11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

11.1 Creative England

- Creative England are keen to discuss some of the opportunities being created by business in Bucks.

11.2 Chiltern District Council

- The Board offered their thanks to Cllr Nick Rose, on his stepping down, for his considerable contribution to the BTVLEP and to Bucks.

12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Friday 4 July 2014, from 9.30am at the Clare Charity Centre, Saunderton.