



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP (BLEP) BOARD MEETING

Held Friday 10 May 2019 from 9.30am at Bosch, Broadwater Park, Denham, Uxbridge UB9 5HJ

Present: Philippa Batting, Buckinghamshire Business First
Adrian Brown, Berkeley Strategic Land Limited
Rebecca Bunting, Independent
Hiren Gandhi, Blaser Mills
Alistair Lomax, University of Buckingham
Eman Martin-Vignerte, Bosch
Andrew M Smith, Pinewood Studios
Cllr Steve Broadbent, Wycombe District Council
Cllr Nick Naylor, South Bucks District Council
Cllr Don Phillips, Chiltern District Council (Alternate)
Cllr Martin Tett, Buckinghamshire County Council

Apologies: Michael Garvey, Chandler Garvey
Cllr Isobel Darby, Chiltern District Council
Cllr Steve Bowles, Aylesbury Vale District Council

In attendance: Ben Golding, Director Energy Efficiency and Local, BEIS
Dan Turner, Local Industrial Strategy Team (Part meeting)
Richard Turl, BEIS South Central & West
Richard Ambrose, Buckinghamshire County Council
Richard Harrington, BLEP Chief Executive
Ian Barham, BLEP Partnerships Manager
Sarah Fraser

SUMMARY MINUTES

1 WELCOME

- AS welcomed new LEP Board members, and colleagues joining the meeting from Whitehall.
- It was reported Adam Stronach has stepped down from the LEP Board to devote more time to his own business. The Board offered its thanks to Adam for his contribution to the LEP over the last few years and noted that this left two private sector vacancies on the Board.
- It was agreed to register Board members as directors of the newly incorporated Buckinghamshire LEP.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- Andrew Smith redeclared an interest in respect of Local Growth Fund Project Applications, the National Film and Television School (National Centre for Immersive Technologies) receive funding from the BFI and Creative Media Skills (Education Centre for Screen and Film Trades) are Pinewood Studios tenants.
- Adrian Brown declared an interest in proposed housing allocations relating to the A355 project.
- Alistair Lomax declared an interest in relation to Local Growth Funding for University of Buckingham.
- Philippa Batting declared an interest in Buckinghamshire Business First/Ngage Solutions Ltd projects.
- Cllr Martin Tett declared an interest in Local Growth Fund projects where Buckinghamshire County Council is the project sponsor.

3 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 22 March 2019

- The minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2019 were agreed as an accurate record.

3.1 Matters arising (not covered elsewhere on the agenda)

- 3.1.1 ➤ **Arc Vision document** –Statistics within the Arc Vision document have been corrected and this has now been published.
- 3.1.2 ➤ **Broadband** – Carried forward – Ian Barham to forward a list to all Board members of postcodes identified for remaining rollout.

4 **LEP INCORPORATION AND TRANSITION**

- Model Articles of Association adopted in order to establish the Buckinghamshire LEP as an incorporated body will now be reviewed with the Section 151 Officer and other partners to ensure these are bespoke to Buckinghamshire and that appropriate insurances and indemnities are in place for Directors of the new company.
- The Board noted the aggressive timetable in place for delivery of the Local Industrial Strategy and recognised the requirement for sufficient resource to enable delivery of this.
- Discussions are underway with Peter Latchford who is assisting in looking at how partners can align in delivery of a seamless economic development service across the county. This work will, necessarily, involve all those currently involved in economic development.
- With regards to local government arrangements, it was noted the Structural Order concerning the new Authority has passed through the House of Commons and had moved to the House of Lords, with a decision anticipated shortly, following which Royal Assent to for the Authority will be required. The Shadow Authority and Transition Executive will come into place within 14 days following completion of this process.
- Andrew Smith will write to Ministers, following Royal assent being granted for the new Authority, to press for a resolution on overlapping LEP geography in the county.
- Board members offered views on the most effective model for delivering economic development. Noting BBF's excellent results, particularly in leveraging funding and the depth of engagement with the business community, the Board recognised the excellent work that has been undertaken by individuals in partner organisations and considered this experience/expertise should be used to best advantage.
- Board members suggested there was more work to be done on providing an agreed local vision, looking to future needs and considering the benefits of sharing Buckinghamshire's stellar resources with other parts of the Arc, balancing the focus currently on Oxford and Cambridge.
- It was suggested any future economic development model should seek to ensure better collaboration across partners in the delivery of the function, eradicating duplication that exists currently both at the level of support to the firm and in looking at "place making".
- It was agreed any future model should be structured to deliver maximum value and growth, reflecting that Buckinghamshire operates not only across the Arc but also works with other neighbouring geographies and others within the LEP network, to mutual benefit.

The Board:

- **Delegated authority to the Chairman (and other interested Board members) to support the executive in taking forward the work looking at suggested models for delivering Buckinghamshire's economic development function, with a view to having a clear proposal to bring to the Board at its next meeting on the preferred structure to discuss with the emerging unitary authority.**
- **Agreed to write to those on the Transition Executive of the new Authority regarding the economic development service to be delivered, outlining results achieved to date.**

5 **LOCAL INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY (LIS)**

- The Buckinghamshire Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) is now with Government who will take this through to publication, anticipated at the beginning of July, with the LEP having an opportunity to comment prior to publication. Government and the Secretary of State are supportive of the LIS and, whilst keen to maintain distinctiveness, are also keen to align local, regional and national ambitions, and to see the articulation of those things Government can practicably assist with in delivering these ambitions. Once published, this co-created document will be adopted as Policy.

- Buckinghamshire LEP was recognised for the important part played in delivering Government’s LIS expectations in terms, and for the clear role played in helping create a coherent vision for the Arc.
- The Board suggested the term “Oxford – Cambridge Arc” is not only detrimental to those in the centre of the Arc, but also breeds misconceptions that the Vision does not reach down to Heathrow or extend far further north than might be realised.
- The Board discussed the role of the universities across the Arc and the value of the intelligence provided in informing discussions on the Vision for the Arc; there are significant opportunities arising for business to collaborate with the relevant universities across the geography.
- Board members noted the significant opportunities for growth in the Arc Vision but highlighted the need to ensure the right infrastructure is deployed around development. For example, the need for investment in the major and local roads that will feed the Expressway (noting the route agreed is considered less than perfect), and the opportunity to ensure digital infrastructure is in place along the route of road and rail development.
- The delay in Buckinghamshire’s receipt of Housing Infrastructure Funding was considered disappointing; investment being required to unlock the area’s full potential. Board members highlighted the importance of having the right infrastructure in place if inward investment aspirations are to be realised.
- With regards to the Buckinghamshire LIS, it was suggested the document would benefit from SME/micro businesses having a greater voice, perhaps linked to the development of specialist hubs in the area which allow these businesses to flourish.
- The challenge for the LEP now is thinking beyond LIS publication and on to delivery, having a mind for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and responding to the Spending Review to come at the end of the year. Board members were asked to consider which areas of the LIS they may wish to champion in delivery.
- The LEP, with the help of Government in brokering conversations, also has a role to play in trying to capture and retain opportunities that currently land outside of the UK.

The Board:

- **Noted the update on the Buckinghamshire LIS, the Arc Vision and the Productivity Group.**
- **Noted the timescales and steps involved around completion of the LIS recognising publication will happen prior to the next Buckinghamshire LEP Board meeting and delegated authority to the Chairman to work on this.**
- **Approved the establishment of a task & finish group, led by the Chairman, to oversee development of a programme of activity to deliver the LIS locally, exploiting opportunities arising from significant infrastructure investment in the county, and looking at key themes/capabilities that Buckinghamshire can play in to the Arc.**
- **Requested wider reference to SME/micro businesses within the LIS on the back of bigger brands.**
- **Made the ask of Government to remove references to Oxford/Cambridge when discussing the Arc.**

6 LOCAL GROWTH FUND UPDATE

- The LEP has had a successful year in progressing existing Local Growth Fund projects and deploying funding to new projects as money becomes available. The LEP was assessed as “exceptional” in terms of delivery at the latest Annual Review, in part due to the selection of projects but also because the LEP has taken risks in project selection and deployed funding quickly. It was confirmed Ministers are keen to see funding spent by 2021.

The Board:

- **Noted the risks associated with delays to the A355, the Eastern Link Road South, and the South East Aylesbury Link Road schemes, and acknowledged the LEP is working with all relevant partners to ensure timely delivery of these projects.**
- **Suggested Government could do more to help with ongoing issues with Network Rail in delivering not only the South East Aylesbury Link Road scheme, but also other schemes around the country.**

- **Noted the need to consider at a future meeting how to ‘reallocate’ Local Transport Body funding that has arisen as a result of securing Housing Infrastructure Fund marginal viability funding to support the A355 scheme.**
- **Noted a further round of Local Growth Fund monies looks increasingly likely and the executive will look to identify existing pipeline and new projects in order to move quickly should funding become available. It was suggested giving consideration to projects involving town centre regeneration, as well as looking at projects that will underpin ongoing LIS work etc.**

7 CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S REPORT

- 7.1 ➤ **Staffing** - Board members noted changes to staffing within the LEP and the pressing need to ensure the economic development function in the county is adequately resourced.
- 7.2 ➤ **Enterprise Zone Update**
 - Good progress was reported with the Enterprise Zone sites, particularly at Westcott which has received global interest from investment partners.
 - Progress on expansion at the Westcott Innovation Centre has been held back pending adjustments to road layouts at the entrance of the site. As a result, it was reported the Space Applications Catapult has requested changes to repayment dates for the ‘loan’ element of funding provided. This was considered wholly appropriate.
- 7.3 ➤ **Growth Hub Update**
 - 2018/19 had been a good year for Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF). The organisation received total core funding of circa £700k (from Buckinghamshire County Council and the LEP) and in return had leveraged an additional £2.5m funding into the county from a number of sources including European monies, DEFRA, HS2, etc. On the back of this, the organisation had encouraged a further £5.8m private sector investment in projects that will improve productivity and growth; and delivered GVA growth of £15.8m. BBF is acting as a catalyst for change.
 - Visit Bucks goes from strength to strength; there are significant opportunities available in the county and work continues to develop itineraries around the tourism product for Buckinghamshire. The Board noted the opportunities offered through leisure industries, recognising the latter delivers significant jobs growth and is important in “place making”.
- 7.4 ➤ **Skills** - Board members noted the progress of the Bucks Skills Advisory Panel.
- 7.5 ➤ **Broadband** - The Board congratulated the LEP team on the level of gainshare to be reinvested supporting the county’s digital agenda in terms of coverage and improving speed/connectivity.
- 7.6 ➤ **Communications**
 - The LEP is supporting Silverstone’s Technology Cluster Conference on 21 May and a Property event at the Waterside Theatre on 6 June.
 - The LEP Annual Report is being prepared and will be shared at the next meeting.

The Board:

- **Endorsed the LEP Delivery Plan (previously circulated) for submission to Government by the end of May 2019 with an update being provided to the LEP Board in July.**
- **Agreed proposed changes to the Space Applications Catapult repayment schedule.**
- **Requested a paper (split by district if possible) outlining the monies leveraged into the county and the impact BBF has had on the county’s economic prosperity.**

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Alistair Lomax invited all present to the Higher Education Festival to be held at the University of Buckingham 26/27 June <https://www.hefestival.com/>

9 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

- **Wednesday** 17 July 2019, 9.30am, Silverstone Experience Innovation Centre
- **Tuesday** 17 September 2019, 9.30am, venue tbc
- **Friday** 15 November 2019, 9.30am, venue tbc