

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

Held Friday 29 January 2016 from 9.30am at Pinewood Studios, Pinewood Road, Iver Heath, Bucks SL0 0NH

**Present:** Cllr Ralph Bagge, South Bucks District Council  
Cllr Steve Bowles, Aylesbury Vale District Council  
Cllr Isobel Darby, Chiltern District Council  
Cllr Martin Tett, Buckinghamshire County Council  
Cllr Katrina Wood, Wycombe District Council  
Klaus Allion, Buckinghamshire Business First (ANT Telecommunications Limited)  
Rebecca Bunting, Buckinghamshire Business First (Buckinghamshire New University)  
Michael Garvey, Buckinghamshire Business First (Chandler Garvey)  
Guy Lachlan, Buckinghamshire Business First (Jones & Cocks Ltd)  
Andrew Smith, Buckinghamshire Business First (Pinewood)

**Apologies:** Eman Martin-Vignerte, Buckinghamshire Business First (Bosch)

**In attendance:** Cllr David Johncock, Wycombe District Council (Part meeting)  
Ian Manktellow, Wycombe District Council (Part meeting)  
Cllr Mark Shaw, Bucks County Council (Part meeting)  
Rachel Wileman, Bucks County Council (Part meeting)  
Hal Painter, BIS South Central & West  
Richard Ambrose, Bucks County Council  
Richard Harrington, BTVLEP Chief Executive (Part meeting)  
Jim Sims, BTVLEP Development Manager  
Ian Barham, BTVLEP Partnerships Manager  
Ruth Farwell, BTVLEP Skills Strategy Manager  
Philippa Batting, Buckinghamshire Business First  
Sarah Fraser

## SUMMARY MINUTES

### 1 PLANNING FOR BUCKINGHAMSHIRE'S FUTURE

- Members of the Buckinghamshire Planning Officers' Group (BPOG) gave a presentation setting the context for planning in Buckinghamshire and discussed the challenges and opportunities available to the county in order to unlock growth.
- BPOG has been working closely with the BTVLEP, having due regard for the BTVLEP's Strategic Economic Plan and the development of the Bucks Infrastructure Investment Plan.
- A number of planning related studies and investigations are taking place eg for the new Expressway. Should any of these progress, consideration will be needed around how to fund delivery, the infrastructure needed to support growth, and how to match housing and jobs growth requirements.
- People/businesses currently outside the county are unrepresented in terms of planning for growth. The Board suggested more engagement is also needed between policy writing and the developer community. Without engagement with these stakeholder groups the creation/filling of jobs will be challenging.
- Bucks has the most porous borders of all LEPs in terms of out commuting. The Board questioned whether flexibility would be permitted within the national policy context in planning calculations around jobs/housing numbers.
- BPOG asked the BTVLEP to consider what might be needed in the future in terms of growth, the type of employment/employment space required and where it may be needed.

- It was agreed the planning context will form a regular feature at future Board meetings.
- The alignment of plans/planning functions and the work being undertaken by Local Authorities was commended by the Board.
- It was agreed to develop a constructive narrative between BPOG and BTVLEP around the subject of housing growth and employment trajectory.
- Active participation in the Local Plan consultations was encouraged, as was the proactive engagement with large employers/known local developers in order to ensure access to the right local intelligence.
- Local Authorities are currently able to protect employment land with identified long term prospects for development from conversion to housing. This ability will be diluted in the future should proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework be implemented.
- BPOG asked the Board to nominate a Planning Champion for the BTVLEP.

## 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- Michael Garvey declared an interest in discussions re UK Space Agency investment at Westcott.

## 3 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 20 November 2015

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

## 4 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

### 4.1 Operational Plan

- The BTVLEP operational plan is being progressed.
- Partnership working will be key to delivering planned activity for the county. Recognising financial pressure is driving many organisations, all investment partners will need to be mobilised to achieve economy at the level of place to the agreed over-arching strategy.
- Central Government has confirmed £250k funding towards LEP running costs for 2016/17 with 100% match required. Partner investment/funding and officer time commitment will be essential in achieving this. An announcement on additional capacity funding is awaited.
- Government's ambition is for LEPs to move to being self-sustaining; funding is only in place for 2016/17 currently. Growth Hub funding for 2016/17 has been confirmed, but again there is an expectation that Growth Hubs will move towards self-sustainability thereafter.

### 4.2 UK Space Agency/Westcott

- The UK Space Agency is continuing to investigate the business case for a National Propulsion Test Facility at Westcott. An update on progress will be brought to the March Board meeting.

### 4.3 5G Innovation Centre, 'Step Out' Facility

- This project is about the creation of a research facility; a centre of excellence, to encourage the development of next generation applications for use on "fat pipes" and mobile devices. It is an opportunity for Bucks to take a lead in developing this future technology. A bid for £600k funding has gone to Government with a match funding commitment of £60k.
- The Board approved the process for selecting the location for the 'Step Out' facility and the draft Expression of Interest for hosting this, noting the ideal place will be in an organisation that sees the potential to develop applications running at 5G speeds.
- The critical issue in terms of success of the centre is the likelihood of engaging with businesses and the ability to encourage people using the centre to develop new technologies.

### 4.4 Enterprise Zone

- Confirmation has been received of the allocation of a multi-site Enterprise Zone (EZ) to Aylesbury Vale under the guardianship of the BTVLEP. The aim of the EZ is to drive activity and it is hoped to use the revenue generated to support economic development in the county.

- Bucks will be able to recoup business rates payable by businesses investing in the EZ (although this policy is yet to be finalised), reinvesting funding to best advantage.
- A memorandum of understanding is being developed, to be signed by all partners, to include a review of resource required and appropriate governance arrangements which will be brought to the Board for approval in March. The final memorandum of understanding is expected with Government prior to the scheme starting in April 2016.
- BTVLEP and Local Authority officers will discuss how additional business rate retention may work and how it will fit with changes to the business rate scheme due to be implemented.
- The Board approved the allocation of finances for a dedicated resource to help move the EZ forward.
- A presentation will be made to the Board in March on how to utilise Private Works Loan Board (PWLB) funding not yet taken up; this may include an element for the EZ.

#### 4.5 Annual Conversation with Government

- The BTVLEP had received a “clean bill of health” at the annual conversation with Government prior to Christmas. Another is scheduled for the end of the year.

#### 4.6 Local Growth Fund (LGF) Projects

- Progress with LGF1/2 projects is being reported on an exception basis to highlight any potential issues, management of the projects being handled by the Bucks Advantage Board on the BTVLEP’s behalf.
- Delays in deploying funding have largely been due to delays in receiving/approving business cases for projects. Scheme sponsors were urged to progress production of full business cases promptly.
- The focus for the current year, in conjunction with the BTVLEP’s accountable body, will be to draw down the full funding grant.
- More information was requested on delays and possible funding gap on the Westbourne Street project.

#### 4.7 Buckinghamshire Infrastructure Investment Plan

- Information is awaited from Government on the next round of Local Growth Fund bidding. In the meantime the Bucks Advantage Board is considering a suggested project prioritisation list produced following a workshop held in December.
- The Board gave approval to publish the Executive Summary of the Buckinghamshire Infrastructure Investment Plan to assist with prioritising bidding going forward.

#### 4.8 Strategic Alliance

- A report on progress with the Strategic Alliance was provided. The geography covered by the Alliance has been expanded to encompass three Bedfordshire unitaries, Milton Keynes and Cambridgeshire, completing the Oxford to Cambridge arc.
- Graham Pendlebury (DfT) had attended the most recent Board meeting and been very supportive of the Alliance and the aspiration to form a sub national transport forum. The scope of the agenda will encompass all forms of transport; road, rail and aviation.
- The agenda for the Alliance is moving swiftly and discussions are ongoing with Government. It was reported DfT see this as a very interesting proposition.
- There are a number of proposals in the Bucks Infrastructure Investment Plan that will be best promoted through the Strategic Alliance.

#### 4.9 Broadband

- BT is being questioned on what Phase 2 of the Connected Counties programme will look like. Discussions are also underway on clawback; the quantum of this being unknown currently.

### 5 **BUCKS GROWTH HUB AND BUSINESS SUPPORT REPORT**

- A report from the Growth Hub had been included within the Board papers. As at the end of quarter 3 2,000 businesses had been assisted, BBF had 8,000 members (47% of whom are actively engaged), there had been a £10.7m growth in GVA, and 541 jobs had been created.

- As part of quarter 3 activity BBF had commissioned an independent external mapping exercise of all publicly funded business support provided in the county. The report had produced 17 recommendations the Growth Hub may choose to focus on in the coming years and a group of local Economic Development Officers, skills providers, and business representatives has been convened to look at the work/focus of the Growth Hub going forward.
- Future Growth Hub funding had been announced but no confirmation had been received on how this will be allocated. There is some concern that Bucks may lose out if the allocation is based on business population rather than being either a straight split of funding between the 39 LEPs or based on a competitive pitch. The BTVLEP was asked to lobby Government for an equal split of funding for the 39 LEPs to enable work to continue to be delivered in Bucks.
- It was agreed RH and Strategic Alliance partners will write to Government lobbying for an equal division/allocation of future Growth Hub monies, maintaining an investment in success.
- BBF were congratulated on the successful opening at Porters Lodge in Aylesbury, the 3<sup>rd</sup> hub in Bucks.
- BBF and Aylesbury Vale District Council are in talks with University Campus Aylesbury Vale regarding the possibility of utilising some of their space as incubation space.

## 6 SKILLS REPORT

- The Skills & Employability Board has been operating for six months and has made good progress showcasing career opportunities to young people and their families, and looking at work readiness. Additional funding has been received from the Careers and Enterprise Company to assist with this.
- The area of employer and school engagement remains an issue and recruiting Enterprise Advisers to work with schools has been a challenge.
- Work continues to promote apprenticeships on a targeted approach focussing on specific sectors. Funding available for this work is being supplemented with additional bids and discussions are underway looking at if there are any funds available through changes to the Government's Apprenticeship Levy.
- The nomenclature of the Masters Apprenticeship was discussed.
- The Skills Board are considering what needs to be achieved in terms of growth. With reducing budgets, greater alignment and a more "joined up" approach with partners is required to achieve more than is possible individually.
- The first meeting of the steering board looking at area based assessments, bringing together Bucks, Oxfordshire and Berkshire LEPs and Local Authorities, has met and discussed the future needs of employers/learners. Data analysis for the area based review has been prepared jointly with Berkshire and Oxfordshire and has been deemed exemplary by the FE Commissioner.
- The next meeting of the steering board will consider the long list options looking at what might be possible in terms of different ways of working between the FE colleges.
- It is hoped the area based reviews will highlight a number of options to be considered by the governing bodies of individual FE colleges and LEPs will have a role to play in providing intelligence and influencing the direction of travel. Those areas with a devolution deal in place or in discussion have a little more clarity on how this will work.

## 7 STRATEGIC ECONOMIC PLAN REFRESH

- The executive presented considerations in refreshing the Strategic Economic Plan to ensure it is still fit for purpose and in line with new information coming from Government.
- The Board agreed the establishment of a sub group to progress the refresh process - membership to be drawn from the main BTVLEP and to be at the executive's discretion.

## 8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Friday 18 March 2016, from 9.30am, at Aylesbury Vale District Council.