



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP (BLEP) BOARD MEETING

Held Wednesday 25 September 2019 from 10.30am at Buckinghamshire New University Aylesbury Campus, 59 Walton Street, Aylesbury, Bucks HP21 7QG

Present: Andrew M Smith, Pinewood Studios (Chair)
Richard Harrington (Chief Executive)
Philippa Batting, Buckinghamshire Business First
Adrian Brown, Berkeley Strategic Land Limited
Rebecca Bunting, Independent
Hiren Gandhi, Blaser Mills
Michael Garvey, Chandler Garvey
Alistair Lomax, University of Buckingham
Eman Martin-Vignerte, Bosch
Cllr Steve Bowles, Aylesbury Vale District Council
Cllr Isobel Darby, Chiltern District Council
Cllr Steve Broadbent, Wycombe District Council
Cllr John Read, South Bucks District Council
Cllr Martin Tett, Buckinghamshire County Council

In attendance: Ian Harper, Buckinghamshire New University (part meeting)
Martin Tugwell, England's Economic Heartland (part meeting)
Zach Wilcox, Arup Group (part meeting)
Kevin Hctor, BEIS South Central & West
Richard Ambrose, Buckinghamshire County Council
Ian Barham, BLEP Partnerships Manager
John Rippon, BLEP Programme Manager
Sarah Fraser

SUMMARY MINUTES

1 WELCOME

- BLEP Board members were welcomed to the Aylesbury Campus of Buckinghamshire New University, and offered a tour of LEP funded incubation space, due to be operational in October. The facility will offer dedicated/hotdesking facilities; forecast occupation rates 60% in Year 1, 85-95% thereafter.
- The university has invested in: back end infrastructure to support the Cyber Security degree programme; CAD/Augmented Reality equipment to support Gaming, Design and Civil Engineering degrees; and a mobile outreach unit providing students/visitors with an immersive environment (currently healthcare).
- The university's café has now been completed and will be operational Friday 27 September.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- Cllr John Read and Andrew Smith declared an interest in discussions around item 8 on the agenda, Heathrow Strategic Planning Group – Economic Vision.

3 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 17 July 2019

- The minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2019 were agreed as an accurate record.

3.1 Matters arising

- 3.1.1 ➤ **Bucks economic outlook** – District level "Growth By Sector"/travel to work information to be recirculated.

- 3.1.2 ➤ **Local Growth Fund – carried forward** – A note of the specific issues being experienced with LGF schemes, particularly the South East Link Road to be provided.
- 3.1.3 ➤ **Local Growth Fund – carried forward** – BCC to confirm work will be done to seek to recover the A355 Beaconsfield Road from developers in order to unlock housing.

4 **ENGLAND’S ECONOMIC HEARTLAND (EEH)**

- Board members noted the EEH’s Outline Transport Strategy, previously circulated. BLEP, and individual partners, were encouraged to respond to the consultation running until 31 October 2019; the result of which will be taken for discussion at the November Strategic Transport Forum.
- The strategy is high level and designed to unlock the significant potential in the region, whilst at the same time recognising and addressing environmental issues.
- The ambition is to have a zero-carbon transport system by 2050, although this may not go far enough.
- The Outline Transport Strategy links closely with the Local Industrial Strategies produced.
- The first report commissioned by EEH was around freight and logistics and freight continues to be a key consideration; as are projects around First/Last mile and supporting efficient movement of individuals.
- EEH’s Strategic Transport Forum has submitted a number of major road network proposals to Government, including enhancing the Aylesbury Link Road, and EEH will be supporting work on the Heathrow masterplan. The Forum will also respond to the consultation around expansion at Luton airport, around improving surface access, at the next phase of that particular consultation.
- EEH is looking at North/South connectivity as well as East/West and is promoting a transport strategy that recognises the need to maintain close links between housing and job creation.
- The importance of the interchange at Old Oak common was acknowledged and will be discussed further at future Strategic Transport Forum meetings.
- EEH is keen to work with LEPs to understand more about existing clusters and where there is potential for new clusters to exploit the area’s great economic potential.
- It was suggested improved maps/diagrams in the strategy would assist in providing clarity around the scale of the current economy and the opportunity available. It was also suggested it would be useful to include Travel To Work information for Buckinghamshire, in line with similar information included for all other areas in the Heartland geography.
- It was agreed Cllr Steve Broadbent will, in future, represent BLEP on the Strategic Transport Forum.

5 **BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY (LIS) DELIVERY**

5.1 Board Recruitment

- The Board supported the sub group’s recommendation to appoint Clare Pelham as a Buckinghamshire LEP Board member. Clare is Chief Executive of the Epilepsy Society based in Chalfont St Peter and her work in this setting touches on the life sciences agenda. She has a wealth of business experience, understands the work of the LEP and is well connected in Government.
- The Board supported further discussion with those applicants not appointed with regards to the possibility of working with the LEP in another capacity.

5.2 LIS

- The Buckinghamshire LIS has now been signed off by Government and delivery will soon commence, which will require establishment of sub-boards reflecting the economic assets/drivers outlined in the LIS.
- Whilst, initially, these sub-boards will be drawn from within Buckinghamshire’s geography, with a view to working on business cases to put to the comprehensive spending review, over time expertise from other geographies could be included.
- Board members counselled sub-boards should be chaired by someone with expertise in the relevant field, and that there should be a clear remit. It was commented a significant number of sub groups have been proposed but with limited resource to support these. It was suggested it may be preferable to establish a completely new, fit for purpose, lean structure rather than broaden the scope of existing structures.
- As an incorporated organisation, the Board acknowledged the need for clarity around the relationship between Board members and staff, and the need to manage any conflicts arising from this.

- The relationship/interface between BLEP and the new Buckinghamshire Growth Board will also be a consideration in structure discussions. LEPs currently lead on the LIS and the productivity agenda, and it was anticipated this will form a part of the Growth Board's wider discussions around Place, Connectivity, etc, noting that this is still to be decided. The creation of the Buckinghamshire Growth Board has been important to enable conversations with Government about the county's specific financial requirements in addition to championing the part Buckinghamshire will play in strategy/delivery across the Arc.

The Board:

- **Noted the content of the report and the update provided at the meeting.**
- **Agreed the appointment of Clare Pelham as a Buckinghamshire LEP Board director.**
- **Requested a diagram asap of sub group structures in place currently, their respective remits (recognising the geo-political changes taking place), and the future structure envisioned to support effective delivery of the LIS.**

6 OXFORD TO CAMBRIDGE GROWTH ARC

- An update was provided on discussions at the Arc Productivity Group and the work being undertaken by Blue Marble Consultancy Group who have been commissioned to help create business cases across the Arc to feed into the Comprehensive Spending Review.
- The Board discussed the issue of bringing forward commercial premises; feedback from business being the right product is not available at the right time in the right place, partly as a result of the change in Permitted Development Rights regulation and the lack of 'protected' employment space in the county.
- The work of the Productivity Group is looking at whether there is a need to be interventionist in terms of employment space or whether there is the opportunity to align better with developers to address this type of issue. It was discussions with business that instigated development of employment space at Woodlands, and the LEP's intervention and support in de-risking investment that allowed employment space to be brought forward at both Silverstone and Westcott.
- Attempting to bring forward speculative development in Buckinghamshire has been difficult in recent years for a variety of reasons. It was suggested Local Authorities have a role to play in providing the environment to allow the private sector to progress development.
- The Board were clear Buckinghamshire wishes to determine its own destiny in terms of economic development and planning for housing, rather than these decisions being made as a result of broader spatial strategies, noting this will be a material consideration in any future Local Plan.
- It was suggested closer involvement of the Arc Universities group with the Productivity Group will see benefits in terms of forward-looking economic development discussions/developing technologies etc.
- The Board recognised the huge potential of the Arc, and for Buckinghamshire within the Arc, but suggested thinking may be tied to too great an extent to existing structures. BLEP will press to ensure that any Arc strategic plan has productivity at its heart and that the link between the Arc/the Heartland and Heathrow is not lost.

The Board:

- **Noted the report and ongoing work to support development of the Arc wide business cases and productivity programme.**

7 HEATHROW STRATEGIC PLANNING GROUP – ECONOMIC VISION

- BLEP is involved in a number of the Heathrow Strategic Planning Group workstreams; specifically, around economic and business development, SME engagement, and how innovation feeds into the Heathrow growth programme.
- Further to the presentation by Zach Wilcox, the Board asked for more details around automation data.
- Both BLEP and Buckinghamshire County Council have responded to the recent Heathrow consultation and have raised items for consideration around surface access (particularly to the north) in light of connectivity issues. It was suggested these issues will be addressed within the Heathrow economic development plan and BLEP will be able to assist in providing the evidence base to support this work.

The Board:

- **Noted the update on Heathrow expansion growth proposals and work towards developing an economic vision and action plan.**
- **Requested a further presentation offering greater clarity around proposals and detailing the proposed action plan for achieving expansion and the impact on Buckinghamshire.**

8 ECONOMY TEAM BUCKS

- BLEP and Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF) are working very closely together to deliver a 'joined up' economic development function to businesses and Government in Buckinghamshire.
- Additionally, the LEP and the Growth Hub are working with Local Authority Economic Development teams to identify the optimal model for delivering economic development in the future.
- Recognising it will be in the gift of the new unitary authority to decide how it wishes to provide economic development support, there was some comment that Local Authority Economic Development teams provide additionality to the roles carried out by BLEP and the BBF Growth Hub.

The Board:

- **Noted the content of the report provided pending sight of the proposition paper from the unitary transition team re future direction for economy and regeneration functions.**

9 BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

- *Redacted due to commercial sensitivity of discussions.*

10 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT/LOCAL GROWTH FUND PROGRAMME UPDATE

10.1 Local Growth Fund

- The mid-year review with Government went well.
- Areas of focus in terms of delivery arising from this discussion are around a retained scheme and the Eastern Link Road South, which is still awaiting final planning consent.
- BLEP remains in a relatively strong position with the regards to LGF monies, with 18 months remaining to deliver the planned programme.

10.2 CEO Report

- **Aylesbury Garden Town** – Board members noted the 2050 Vision documents circulated with Board papers (confidential until released in October). More discussion is required around the economy agenda in relation to the Garden Town.
- **Skills Hub** – The excellent work of the Skills team was acknowledged; Buckinghamshire's Skills Hub being number 1 in the country, providing young people with real support and foresight. Board members were reminded the Skills Show will take place 18/19 October, with attendance set to break all previous records.
- **Enterprise Zones** – A bid for £15m went to SEMLEP to support the Silverstone Sports Innovation Campus proposal. Unfortunately, the project will not be progressing as quickly as it might, partly due to state aid issues. Discussions are underway with government colleagues on the project which is complementary to the work already supported by BLEP.

11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Nothing of note.

12 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

- **Wednesday** 13 November 2019, **10.30am**, Research Centre, Epilepsy Society, Chesham Lane, Chalfont St Peter, Bucks SL9 0RJ.