



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP (BLEP) BOARD MEETING

Held Wednesday 13 November 2019 from 10.30am, Epilepsy Society, Chesham Lane, Chalfont St Peter SL9 0RJ

Present: Andrew M Smith, Pinewood Studios (Chair)
Richard Harrington (Chief Executive)
Adrian Brown, Berkeley Strategic Land Limited
Hiren Gandhi, Blaser Mills
Michael Garvey, Chandler Garvey
Alistair Lomax, Arc Universities Group
Clare Pelham, Epilepsy Society
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 (Part meeting)
Cllr Martin Tett, Buckinghamshire County Council

Apologies: Philippa Batting, Buckinghamshire Business First
Rebecca Bunting, Independent
Eman Martin-Vignerte, Bosch

In attendance: Kerry Senatore, Careers & Enterprise Company (Part meeting)
Marina Jackson, Under 19 Skills Manager, Bucks Skills Hub
Kevin Hctor, BEIS South Central & West
Fiorella Mugari, Buckinghamshire County Council
Ian Barham, BLEP Partnerships Manager
Sarah Fraser

SUMMARY MINUTES

1 WELCOME

- The BLEP Board were welcomed to the Epilepsy Society, the charity being founded 125 years ago on the site in Chalfont St Peter to provide sanctuary for people with epilepsy.
- In recent years the society has moved into research/advocacy, helping people understand epilepsy is a largely hidden disease, suffered by 1 in 100 people, and resulting in around 1,000 deaths each year.
- The Research Centre is the leading centre into epilepsy, employing the services of the world's premier neurologist in this field. The Epilepsy Society will be investing heavily into research in the coming 5-10 years aiming to develop a functional cure for epilepsy in the next 10-20 years.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- Clare Pelham declared her daughter is Special Adviser to the Secretary of State for Transport, and volunteer for one of the Party campaigns.
- Alistair Lomax declared he had taken on a new role as Director of the Arc Universities Group.
- Adrian Brown declared he is now a Director of John Hampden Grammar School, High Wycombe.

3 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 25 September 2019

- The minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2019 were agreed as an accurate record.

3.1 Matters arising

- 3.1.1 ➤ **Buckinghamshire economic outlook** – BLEP has a new Research Manager, Caroline Perkins (starting in December) who will be updating District level information as a first task.
- 3.1.2 ➤ **Local Growth Fund** – Shared value issues have been resolved re the Aylesbury Link Road. Planning permission is still outstanding on the Woodlands site but is anticipated shortly.
- 3.1.3 ➤ **BLEP Board membership** – There remains one vacancy on the BLEP Board and expressions of interest are being progressed.

4 **SKILLS UPDATE**

- An update was provided on the Skills/Careers Hubs, Buckinghamshire being in the first wave of hubs.
- The Careers and Enterprise Company works with c4,700 maintained schools (including Academies, excluding independent schools) across the country measuring and working towards achievement of the 8 Gatsby benchmarks. Schools with an Enterprise Adviser have a higher level of skills than those without, and schools benefitting from a Careers Hub show even greater success.
- Buckinghamshire is a high performing LEP area and shows great improvement on previous results (unusual in an area with already high achievement).
- 21 of the 38 Buckinghamshire schools are within the Buckinghamshire Careers Hub; there being a deliberate strategy to target upper (rather than selective) schools.
- The alignment of BBF, BLEP and Skills Hub staff and the dynamic and fast-moving support of the Skills team, was cited as a contributing factor to Buckinghamshire's outstanding performance; the purity of the model in Buckinghamshire offering clarity for where schools should seek support.
- A number of activities undertaken not provided in other areas, eg the Skills Show (at a professional level equal to national conferences held in London/Manchester) add to Buckinghamshire's USP.
- Schools with well supported Careers Leads achieve greater success against the 8 Gatsby benchmarks; Government's target being all schools achieve success against all 8 by the end of 2020. Schools and employers realise achieving this target will provide the best outcome for young people and that engagement with industry and looking at wider career pathways is key.
- The Board discussed sustainability of future events; how to make them self-funding and how to continue to leverage the considerable additional support the Skills team has previously secured.
- The Arc Productivity Group is undertaking work on the "skills revolution" with discussion around sharing information and resource; BLEP's new Research Manager providing support on data analysis.
- The Board suggested exploring alternative sources of future funding, such as the Disability Confident scheme and Equalities & Diversity funding; Government seeking to support placements.
- The Board congratulated the Skills team on the success of the recent Skills Show, noting over 4,000 visitors had attended the show, c130 employers and 52 schools (including around 23 from outside the county) over the two day period.
- The Skills Team's work was supported by an initial LEP investment of £120k from Growing Places Fund monies, being used to tremendous effect to leverage additional funding; this will come to an end in 2020. Skills activity at the current level cannot be sustained on the capital grant received from Government and support needs to be placed on a more secure platform if this workstream is to continue at the same level.
- **The Board agreed to investigate the level of support being provided to the Skills Hub within the new unitary authority budget.**

5 **DELIVERING THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY (LIS) FOR A NEW PARLIAMENT**

- Following publication of the Buckinghamshire LIS (and the 3 other areas in the Arc) in July, the Board expressed the desire to move forward quickly with LIS implementation and asked that new parliamentary candidates, once announced, are fully briefed on the LEP's work.
- Key areas of focus will be around:
 - Development of business cases for submission to a New Year Comprehensive Spending Review with the aim of securing funding for the county's priorities; and
 - Appropriate structure/governance models to facilitate delivery of agreed strategies.

5.1 Messaging

- LEP areas within the Arc are working to develop business cases for presentation to Government around 5 workstreams: skills; internationalisation; enhanced business support services; commercial premises/properties, filling gaps in existing stock; and, a funders fund. There will be significant work involved in bringing together all groups with an interest in these themes.
- Buckinghamshire will develop business cases for all its assets to bid for funding as this is announced.
- The Board noted consideration will need to be given as to how to fund feasibility studies, particularly in view of the pressure on Local Authority revenue budgets.
- More work is to be done to engage to a greater extent with universities/faculty staff; to look at how to regenerate town centres to maximum effect; to consider how to gain maximum impact from initiatives like Aylesbury's Garden Town and attract more funding to the area.
- The LEP Network is co-ordinating LEP messages into the political parties during the campaign period.

It was agreed:

- **The executive team will draft a high level briefing note for prospective parliamentary candidates highlighting what can be achieved in the county given support; investment in Buckinghamshire returning vital net contributions to HMT.**
- **AS will request sight of draft manifestos for each of the political parties, if available.**

5.2 Structure

- The Board noted the presentation on proposed future governance/sub committee structures.
- The executive team commended the outstanding level of service offered to the LEP by Buckinghamshire Business First, particularly in comparison to the level of support offered by Growth Hubs in neighbouring LEP areas. Board members were asked to share any suggested areas for improvement with the BBF team.
- Re investment at the level of place, the Enterprise Zones are performing well, however the relationship with Buckinghamshire Advantage requires further consideration.
- The Board noted the inclusion of work on a digital strategy and asked the executive to maintain focus on delivery of the digital agenda.
- The differing roles of BLEP and the Buckinghamshire Growth Board were explored with the suggestion that Growth Boards, a government-led initiative, bring together those with an interest in the broader economic agenda, wider than simply economic development, which is the focus for BLEP, and on which BLEP will report at Growth Board meetings.

The Board:

- **Endorsed the recommendation re configuring future activity around the requirements of the annual review (governance, strategy, delivery).**
- **Agreed the establishment of Remuneration, and Finance & Audit committees.**
- **Agreed to hold further discussion at a LEP awayday in January on:**
 - **Sub group structure and their relevant Terms of Reference, prior to Board sign off.**
 - **How Growth Boards/LEPs fit together.**

6 **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT**

Further to the report circulated the following was noted:

6.1 South East Energy Hub

- **The Board supported the executive's recommendations that Ed Barlow of Buckinghamshire County Council represents BLEP on the Greater South East Energy Hub with delegated authority on financial decisions up to prescribed limits, referring to the Buckinghamshire LEP CEO or Partnerships Manager outside these limits.**

6.2 LEP Network

- The Board noted the new LEP groupings being implemented by the LEP Network and representation of the Arc+ grouping into the LEP Network management board.

6.3 Enterprise Zone

- The Enterprise Zone programme continues to perform well with £600k being generated for the area in terms of retained business rates from Silverstone.

6.4 Aylesbury Garden Town

- The Board noted the consultation being undertaken on the AGT masterplan, and that Member, Parish and Town Council events are planned. It was agreed to invite representatives from the Aylesbury Garden Town team to present to the BLEP Board on how to use the area as a living lab, etc.

6.5 Annual Conversation With Government

- BLEP's annual conversation with Government will likely take place before the next scheduled Board meeting and Board members will be invited to attend this as appropriate, recognising very limited representation was requested by Government last year.

6.6 Communications

- Board members noted the branding and messaging work underway but did not wish to be directly involved in this process, reminding the Executive to minimise non-essential expenditure in this area.

7 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

7.1 Arc Universities Group

- The Arc Universities Group will be investing £130k to produce baseline applied research around: the Environment; Entrepreneurship; and Space. This work being carried out across the Arc geography, led by Cranfield, and to be completed by 31 March 2020.

7.2 LEP Overlap

- A decision is still to be reached on LEP overlaps; noting BEIS/MHCLG are withholding funding pending resolution of overlaps in individual areas.

7.3 Board

- The Board offered thanks to AS/RH for the excellent leadership of the LEP throughout 2019.

8 **DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

- Thursday 23 January 2019, 9am, Board awayday, Bosch Innovation Hub
- Friday 7 February 2020, 9.30am, Board meeting, venue tbc
- Friday 22 May 2020, 9.30am, Board meeting, venue tbc
- Friday 11 September 2020, 9.30am, Board meeting, venue tbc
- Friday 4 December 2020, 9.30am, Board meeting, venue tbc