



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP (BLEP) BOARD MEETING

Held Friday 7 February 2020 from 9.30am, McAfee, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, HP19 8ED

- Present:**
- Andrew M Smith, Pinewood Studios (Chair) (AS)
 - Philippa Batting, Buckinghamshire Business First (PB)
 - Adrian Brown, Berkeley Strategic Land Limited (AB)
 - Lucy Edge, Satellite Applications Catapult (LE)
 - Hiren Gandhi, Blaser Mills (HG)
 - Michael Garvey, Chandler Garvey (MG)
 - Alistair Lomax, Arc Universities Group (AL)
 - Eman Martin-Vignerte, Bosch (EMV)
 - Clare Pelham, Epilepsy Society (CP)
 - CLlr Nick Rose, Chiltern District Council (Alternate) (NR)
 - CLlr David Johncock, Wycombe District Council (Alternate) (DJ)
 - CLlr Martin Tett, Buckinghamshire County Council (MT)
- Apologies:**
- Rebecca Bunting, Independent
 - CLlr Steve Bowles, Aylesbury Vale District Council
 - CLlr Steve Broadbent, Wycombe District Council
 - CLlr Isobel Darby, Chiltern District Council
 - CLlr John Read, South Bucks District Council
- In attendance:**
- Kevin Hoctor, BEIS South Central & West (KH)
 - Richard Ambrose, Buckinghamshire County Council (RA)
 - Richard Harrington, BLEP (Chief Executive) (RH)
 - Ian Barham, BLEP Partnerships Manager (IB)
 - John Rippon, BLEP Programme Manager (JR)
 - Anthony Sowden, AVEZ Director (ASo)
 - Catherine Godward, Skills Advisory Panel Research Manager (CG)
 - Caroline Perkins, BLEP Research Manager (CP)
 - Sarah Fraser (SF)

SUMMARY MINUTES

- 1 **WELCOME**
 - The Board were welcomed to McAfee; the company having been based in Aylesbury for 25 years (as Dr Solomon prior to becoming McAfee).
 - Local business challenges facing the organisation include:
 - Difficulty sourcing German speaking support staff due to Brexit.
 - The need to pay inflated salaries in order to attract staff due to London’s proximity.
 - The lack of vibrancy/entertainment available for young people in and around Aylesbury.
 - Connectivity in terms of the road network.
- 2 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
 - Lucy Edge declared an interest as a Board member of Cornwall and Isles of Scilly LEP (interest scheduled to end on 17 February); and as a Non-Executive Director of MENCAP.

3 **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 13 November 2019**

- The minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2019 were agreed as an accurate record.

3.1 Matters arising

- 3.1.1 ➤ **Buckinghamshire Council Skills budget** – Buckinghamshire Council’s education budget is now set. MT to confirm the level of support to be offered to the Buckinghamshire Skills Hub.
- 3.1.2 ➤ **Aylesbury Garden Town** – Representatives from the Aylesbury Garden Town team will be invited to provide an update at a future BLEP Board.

4 **BOARD MEMBER INTRODUCTION**

- The Board welcomed Lucy Edge to her first formal meeting; the Board now being at full complement.

5 **LOCAL INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY (LIS) IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

5.1 Succession Planning (AS/MG left the meeting; MT assumed the Chair)

- In order to provide continuity and stability during exceptional circumstances brought about by Buckinghamshire’s local government restructure and the LEP’s incorporation, and to allow time for recruitment, **the Board agreed unanimously that:**
 - **MG will remain as Vice Chair & Board Member until the end of 2020 calendar year, with AS remaining as Chair & Board Member until the end of 2021 calendar year.**
 - **Preparations for the Recruitment of a new Vice Chair/Chair will begin immediately to allow a smooth transition.**
- This arrangement sits within national guidelines/framework and BLEP will confirm agreement reached/ plans put in place re succession generally in advance of the Annual Performance Review moderation.

(AS/MG rejoined the meeting; AS resumed as Chair)

5.2 Board Structure

- A streamlined sub structure was presented, mirroring the conversation with Government around the Annual Performance Review, and with the aim of assisting delivery of the LIS, providing resilience, thought leadership and tasked with developing proposals for consideration by the main LEP Board.
- With regards to legacy organisations, the relationship with Bucks Advantage and the ESIF committee will be reviewed in due course once arrangements around the unitary council and EU funding have been resolved; and further work will be undertaken to ensure the Local Transport Body work aligns with the main LEP Board strategic aims.
- With regards to the proposed Enterprise & Innovation Panel, it was agreed the work of this group, looking at strategic drivers that touch on each of the sub groups and ensuring at a technical/specialist level that activity across the sub groups is aligned, will take place at main Board level.
- It was confirmed Government is supportive of LEPs, of the Arc, and of the move to establish Growth Boards. The Devolution white paper, once published, will provide more information on structure, UK Shared Prosperity Fund, etc. The Board voiced the hope that, in devolution deal discussions, Government will recognise the opportunities presenting themselves in Bucks to the wider UK benefit.
- It was suggested Buckinghamshire should consider contributing to the Place report being prepared by the Science and Engineering lobby group, sharing examples of good practice.

It was agreed:

- **Any sub structure implemented will retain decision-making authority at main Board level.**
- **Richard Harrington will work with identified main Board leads to prepare consistent Terms of Reference for each of the sub groups, bringing these to the next BLEP Board meeting for approval.**
- **Sub groups will develop and present a range of “options” to the main Board for consideration rather than single project recommendations.**
- **To structure future Board agendas to encompass the role of the Enterprise and Innovation Panel.**

5.3 Business Plan

- The Board congratulated the executive on the work done to date and suggested there is more thinking to be done around threats and barriers, the targets the LEP wishes to achieve and how it will know when it has reached these.

It was agreed:

- **To ensure wording within the plan is positive.**
- **To consider incorporating information on the Lean Canvas into the BLEP business plan.**
- **To create a standard 'script' around the business plan.**

5.4 Risk Register

- Following discussion, the risk register had been restructured and Board members were asked to forward areas they considered were missing from the register circulated.
- The Board agreed an ongoing review of resource requirements to ensure appropriate delivery capacity.

It was agreed:

- **To add total figures to the grid produced and provide an organisational overview.**
- **The Risk Register will be 'policed' by the Audit committee going forward.**
- **To ensure the grid lists the actual risks (rather than statements) linked to the BLEP's objectives.**
- **To produce for the next meeting a note of what/where BLEP has invested to date and what has been delivered for this investment.**

5.5 Peer Review

- BLEP has been paired with the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP with regards to the LEP Peer Review organised by the LEP Network. A meeting with Stoke & Staffs is planned for 16 March.

5.6 Stakeholder Engagement

- **It was agreed it would be useful for a representative from BBF as the "engine for business" within Buckinghamshire to attend the BCC/BLEP meeting with Buckinghamshire MPs.**

6 **LOCAL GROWTH FUND (LGF) UPDATE**

- The Board received an update on progress with LGF programme delivery, noting difficulties being experienced in progressing the Marlow to Maidenhead rail improvements (due to delays caused by Network Rail) and that concerns had been raised with both DfT through the Annual Performance Review discussions and with Steve Baker MP at a recent briefing. The Board also noted the significant benefit to be gained in terms of transport management, improving north/south connectivity, and supporting the low carbon agenda and were keen every effort be made to deliver this scheme.
- Re the University of Buckingham project for a School for Computing and a Centre for Artificial Intelligence, the Board requested clarity around management of funding commitment requirements.
- The Board noted continuing issues with the Eastern Link Road South scheme and that this may impact on land acquisition timescales. The Board expressed deep concern at the inordinate amount of time taken to secure planning permission on this scheme and the resultant impact of lost revenue to the county for economic growth from the Enterprise Zone.
- The Board also expressed significant concern around delays in delivery of the A355 road scheme and questioned how this might be progressed to a successful conclusion.
- The Board recognised many LGF (and other) projects rely on partnership working and that there needs to be far greater alignment of partners/expertise, use of powers, and sharing of information if major projects and infrastructure are to be delivered in a timely manner.

It was agreed:

- **To write to Government requesting support to unlock the Marlow to Maidenhead rail improvement scheme.**
- **To discuss the Eastern Link Road South land purchase arrangements with DfT.**

- **The Capital Programme sub group in conjunction with Local Authorities will assist the executive to develop recommendations for the main Board re how to progress issues identified with LGF projects.**
- **To develop a proactive contact management strategy; a paper to be produced for a future meeting.**
- **Future Local Growth Fund updates will include information at the end of each project update on issues being experienced/possible interventions/action required.**
- **An update will be provided at the next meeting on activity in the innovation hubs supported by BLEP.**

7 **ENTERPRISE ZONE UPDATE** (Document tabled)

- An update on Enterprise Zone work was provided; the sites at Silverstone and Westcott being enormously successful and delivering significant floor space and jobs. Good progress is being made overall despite slow progress with the Woodlands scheme, and work continues to deliver the full economic benefit available.
- The Board considered the possibility of using a proportion of retained business rates to provide business support, and the wider economic development initiative to ensure businesses remain trading/profitable once initial cash incentives for being part of the Enterprise Zone are removed.
- **It was agreed work is required to raise the profile of the Enterprise Zone sites nationally, attracting greater investment and capturing secondary benefits; this to be discussed at the AVEZ Board.**
- **It was agreed to model the future impact of the Enterprise Zones in terms of jobs, floor space, etc.**

8 **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT**

Further to the reports previously circulated, the following was noted:

8.1 Budget

The Board:

- **Approved the operational revenue budget presented for 2020/21, noted the slight draw on revenue reserves, partly due to the delays in settling the geographical overlap with SEMLEP, and the requirement to hold a LEP bond in the financial year 2020/21.**
- **Delegated authority to the Audit Committee to consider and approve minor in-year variations to budget; major in-year variations will be referred to the main LEP Board.**

8.2 Heathrow Economic Vision

- Board members noted the Heathrow Economic Vision and BLEP's role in helping to support delivery of the action plan.

8.3 Growth Hub Update

- An update on the work of the Growth Hub and Buckinghamshire Business First's (BBF) wider economic development support to the county was provided.
- BBF currently receives £287k LEP Growth Hub funding and £413k Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) funding to support a vibrant local economy. BBF uses this money to leverage significant additional funding (c £2.4m in grant funding and c £6m private sector match) to support the ambitions within the LIS, but would be unable to do this without initial funding from the LEP and BCC.
- Over the last 10 years, BBF has drawn approximately £72m funding into the county to accelerate growth; has delivered c 4,500 jobs and given out millions of pounds in grant money.

8.4 Skills Update

- An update was provided on skills analysis work being undertaken and the work to establish the skills action plan for Buckinghamshire.
- Further to the presentation given, the Board questioned:
 - Whether there is an opportunity to provide low cost housing to support recruitment of key workers to shortage professions, perhaps retaining young people within the county; something bigger businesses have done in the past. It was confirmed this has been raised through the Skills Advisory Panel work and will feature in the final research document and analysis.

- Whether there is an opportunity to create an institution similar to MIT in Boston within the Arc geography that will help spin out and develop new ideas. It was confirmed the Arc Universities Group is starting to look at this, 20% of the UK spin out already taking place in the Arc geography.

8.5 BLEP AGM

- It was confirmed the Buckinghamshire LEP AGM will be held on Friday 6 March at Aylesbury Vale District Council offices as part of the Business Festival.

9 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

9.1 Arc Universities Group

- AL reported the Arc Universities Group have invested in baseline applied research around: Skills; Entrepreneurship; the Environment; Space and Aerospace and will be hosting an event on 30 March 2020 – further details to be provided.

10 **DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

- Friday 22 May 2020, 9.30am, Board meeting, Pinewood Studios
- Friday 11 September 2020, 9.30am, Board meeting, Bosch Innovation Hub
- Friday 4 December 2020, 9.30am, Board meeting, Pinewood Studios