



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP (BLEP) BOARD MEETING

Held Friday 22 May 2020 from 9.30am, via Zoom

Present: Andrew M Smith, Pinewood Studios (Chair)
Richard Harrington, BLEP (Chief Executive)
Philippa Batting, Buckinghamshire Business First
Adrian Brown, Berkeley Strategic Land Limited
Lucy Edge, Satellite Applications Catapult
Hiren Gandhi, Blaser Mills
Michael Garvey, Chandler Garvey
Alistair Lomax, Arc Universities Group
Eman Martin-Vignerte, Bosch
Clare Pelham, Epilepsy Society
Emma Potts, University of Buckingham
Cllr Steve Bowles, Buckinghamshire Council
Cllr Steve Broadbent, Buckinghamshire Council
Cllr Isobel Darby, Buckinghamshire Council
Cllr Martin Tett, Buckinghamshire Council (Part meeting)

Apologies: Cllr Nick Naylor, Buckinghamshire Council

In attendance: Kevin Hoctor, BEIS South Central & West
Richard Ambrose, Buckinghamshire Council
Ian Barham, BLEP Partnerships Manager
Jack Douglass, BLEP Broadband Programme Manager
Marina Jackson, Bucks Skills Hub
Caroline Perkins, BLEP Research Manager
John Rippon, BLEP Programme Manager
Sarah Fraser

SUMMARY MINUTES

1 WELCOME

- AS welcomed new Board member (Emma Potts) and all returning Local Authority Board members following the move to unitary authority and pending local elections in 2021.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- Emma Potts declared an interest in relation to item 6 on the agenda and the open call for projects to be supported through the Local Growth Fund.

3 COVID-19 LOCAL ECONOMIC IMPACT (Presentation attached)

- The Board noted the presentation given on COVID-19 and the Bucks economy.
- There is concern around staff at Heathrow/Luton, and British Airways staff being made redundant. Work is underway to look at the possibility of repurposing people within, for example, the creative industries or within the space sector at Westcott.

It was agreed:

- **To write, in conjunction with neighbouring LEPs to Grant Shapps (DfT) and Mims Davies (DWP) re the establishment of the working group looking at repurposing aviation staff being made redundant.**

4 BUCKINGHAMSHIRE ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN

- The Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) evidence base refresh has started which will inform development of the Buckinghamshire Economic Recovery Plan and support Arc discussions. The importance of close engagement with the Arc Universities Group and the LEP Network going forward was acknowledged.
- A draft Recovery Plan will be brought to the BLEP Board at its meeting in July.

It was agreed:

- **To establish two groups to assist in development of the Bucks Economic Recovery Plan: a Steering Group drawing membership from BLEP Board members, the wider business community, Government agencies and the 'Team Bucks' business cell; and a Digital Infrastructure Group considering cross-technology issues, opportunities, and skills required. Public sector representation on these groups will be key to ensure development of a single track place based Recovery Plan fully integrated with other work underway.**
- **Michael Garvey/Jack Douglass will review the draft Digital Strategy previously circulated in light of comments around digital provision on business parks, capacity requirement for business, health and education and the need to look wider in geographical terms; bringing a paper to the next Board meeting on how to progress this work.**

5 CAPITAL PROGRAMME SUB GROUP

5.1 Buckinghamshire Business Resilience Support Fund (BBRSF)

- The Board noted the update from the Capital Programme Sub Group in relation to the excellent support packages put in place by Government during the COVID-19 crisis which have left very few businesses eligible under current criteria to apply for the LEP's current business resilience support fund.
- Businesses that have applied to the fund have benefitted from speaking to a BBF Adviser who has helped in signposting to funding businesses are eligible for and helping to consider measures needed to weather the current crisis.
- Businesses are now looking at how to recover as quickly as possible post crisis and there is a need to encourage innovation, recognising the effects of the crisis may be felt for many months to come; hence the recommendation to repurpose the existing fund into a new fund to support recovery.

(Martin Tett left the meeting)

The Board:

- **Supported the recommendation to reposition BBRSF as a new recovery fund, detaching eligibility criteria from support received through national Government schemes, with a maximum funding request to dovetail with Government's Future Fund (the detail to be agreed by the Capital Programme Sub Group), and with the ability to increase the size of the 'funding pot' by drawing in other monies under the umbrella of the fund.**
- **Delegated authority to the Capital Programme Sub Group to agree criteria around the level of match funding required, to put in place appropriate and clear measurable targets, and to make any further changes in the fund criteria should circumstances change.**
- **Requested a significant, creative, marketing campaign be undertaken to ensure all businesses who might be able to benefit are aware of this 'new' fund.**

5.2 Local Growth Fund update

- The Board noted the update on the Local Growth Fund (LGF) provided in Board papers, the outcome of the meeting on 3 April with project sponsors, the response received to the open call issued at the end of March, and the appointment of Hatch Regeneris to undertake an independent evaluation on the bids received to the open call.

(Emma Potts declared an interest in these discussions.)

- Government are to pay two thirds of LEPs' total 2020/21 LGF allocation in May; the final third being released subject to Government evaluation over the summer period. Clarification is awaited on how 2021/22 funding will be allocated.

It was agreed:

- **Current LGF funds in the GWR/Network Rail project, Marlow to Maidenhead rail improvements, will be reallocated as the project cannot be progressed in the current period; the executive will continue to work with GWR/ Network Rail to include the scheme in a later round of programme funding.**
- **To review the Hatch Regeneris evaluation of bids to the latest open call (with a view to this funding, £1.7m, being deployed in year) at the July BLEP Board meeting.**

6 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS – 7 February, 20 March, 20 April 2020

- The minutes of the above meetings were agreed as accurate records of proceedings.

7 AUDIT AND FINANCE SUB GROUP

It was agreed:

- **To make suggested changes to the Corporate Risk Register and give this greater prominence at future Board meetings, embedding this as an operational tool.**
- **To include notations on individual future Board papers as to which risk each paper addresses.**
- **To endorse the recommended changes to the Assurance and Accountability Framework.**

8 REMUNERATION AND NOMINATION SUB GROUP

- The Board endorsed the appointments of Emma Potts (BLEP Board member) and Gavin Brooks (Skills Advisory Panel Chair). Gavin will attend future Board meetings as an Observer.
- With regards to Chair appointments, these must be advertised nationally, recruitment adhering to Government guidelines. Vice Chair appointments are a matter for individual LEPs.

It was agreed:

- **Richard Harrington will develop a process for Vice Chair appointment seeking approval of the same at the July Board.**

9 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

- Further to the report previously circulated, it was noted Buckinghamshire Council currently retains 5 seats at the BLEP Board; this will reduce to 3 post May 2021 elections.
- As a result of delayed elections, the Buckinghamshire Growth Board continues to operate on an interim basis. It was confirmed there will be an opportunity to increase the business voice at the Growth Board table in due course.

9.1 Skills update

- The Bucks Skills Hub team continues to work with the 47 Buckinghamshire schools, providing additional support where needed during the current crisis.
- Bucks Skills Hub's "Isolation Inspiration" newsletter has provided an excellent source of materials and information and has received positive feedback, across the county and from other geographies.
- The Skills Hub continues to perform well against the Gatsby benchmarks, meeting its targets and retaining its position as the best performing hub in the country.
- The Bucks Skills Show in October has been cancelled (the date for October 2021 already confirmed) but will be replaced by some form of virtual activity.
- It was suggested it would be useful to bring Buckinghamshire's universities and schools closer together to share issues/best practice.

- The Skills Action Plan work is being refreshed in light of the impact of COVID-19 and will take account of the 'new normal'. This will form part of the Recovery Plan work, but what has already emerged is that a Redundancy Task Force is needed to help with retraining etc.

10 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Nothing of note.

11 **DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

Thursday 30 July 2020, 9.30am, Board meeting, venue tbc or via Zoom

Friday 11 September 2020, 9.30am, Board meeting, Bosch Innovation Hub

Friday 4 December 2020, 9.30am, Board meeting, Pinewood Studios