



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LEP (BLEP) AUDIT AND FINANCE SUB GROUP MEETING

Held Tuesday 5 May 2020 from 2.30pm via Teams

Present:	Hiren Gandhi (Chair)	(HG)
	Lucy Edge	(LE)
	Cllr Martin Tett	(MT)
In attendance:	Richard Harrington	(RH)
	Ian Barham	(IB)
	Fiorella Mugari	(FM)
	Sarah Fraser	(SF)

SUMMARY MINUTES

1 TERMS OF REFERENCE

- The Sub Group agreed Terms of Reference previously circulated, noting the BLEP Chief Executive will be included in the quorum should one of HG, LE or MT be unable to attend a future meeting.
- It was confirmed investment decisions are currently taken at main LEP Board level but authority may in future be delegated to the Sub Group.

2 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW

- The Sub Group noted the outcome of BLEP's Annual Performance Review and that as a result of the excellent result the LEP would receive its full financial settlement in terms of operational costs for the coming year. All actions arising from the Review had been undertaken or were in hand.
- In terms of delivery, the Sub Group were advised work is progressing through the BLEP Capital Programme Sub Group to ensure legitimate defrayal of Local Growth Funds in year, particularly on the Eastern Link Road transport scheme, which is awaiting final planning consents, and the South East Aylesbury Link Road retained scheme.
- With regards to governance, BLEP has made a significant number of changes in the last year to meet LEP Review requirements, including: incorporating; completing TUPE arrangements for staff; and ensuring appropriate Board balance in terms of gender, diversity and skill sets, etc.
- BLEP is strong in terms of its approach to Strategy and achieved a "Pass" at Review. It was anticipated future Reviews may seek to evaluate LEP programme and the impacts achieved, and may look to a finer grading rather than the current Pass/Fail.
- The Sub Group voiced concerns around the evolving relationship between Government and LEPs and the need for LEPs to maintain individuality if they are to reflect local economic conditions.

3 PEER REVIEW

- The Sub Group noted the feedback previously circulated on the Peer Review, a LEP Network initiative, undertaken with Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP.

4 AUDIT FEEDBACK

- The Sub Group noted the feedback received from the audit undertaken by the then Buckinghamshire County Council in its capacity as BLEP's accountable body, and the reassurance this provided in terms of the LEP's operations.

- The two actions arising for the LEP from the audit were both being undertaken: to review the assurance framework to bring this in line with the new Sub Group structures and the establishment of the new unitary authority; and to commence a programme to review arrangements for the Local Growth Programme.
- The audit also provided actions for the accountable body in relation to the Section 151 Officer relationship with a private company, and the MOU in place between the council and the LEP, and these actions are also in hand.

5 LOCAL ASSURANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

- The Sub Group endorsed the suggested changes highlighted in the documents previously circulated, and would recommend adoption of the same to the LEP main Board on 22 May 2020.
- In reviewing membership of the main Board, the Sub Group were keen this continues to be business (rather than Local Authority or Academia) focussed and led. The Sub Group noted plans in place re future recruitment to the Board to replace members due to step down at the end of their term, and the planned phased approach to Vice Chair/Chair recruitment, the latter requiring someone with significant business and political acumen and influence.

6 BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LEP FINANCIAL SUMMARY

- The Sub Group discussed the documents previously circulated and noted the level of reserves held in the company.
- Recognising the scale of the task faced by the LEP, it was suggested considering resources needed in the coming months to ensure the LEP has appropriate breadth and depth of support available.

The Sub Group requested:

- **Future reports provide clarity on the process for estimating required reserves level.**
- **Future reports clearly outline: committed capital funding; committed revenue funding; free reserves ie funding that is free to be used in a crisis.**
- **Future reports provide visibility around the detail of likely gainshare to be received on Broadband contracts. The Sub Group considered the subject of how to deploy this money warranted detailed discussion at main LEP Board level on 22 May, in conjunction with discussion around overall Digital Strategy.**
- **Future reports provide visibility on any other significant funds eg monies accruing in the Enterprise Zones etc.**

7 RISK REGISTER

- The Sub Group noted the Risk Register previously circulated and the changes made subsequent to the BLEP Board Awayday held on 23 January 2020.

The Sub Group:

- **Requested that where changes in risk rating occur that figures show by how much the risk has increased or decreased.**
- **Considered the risk register should play a far more prominent role at main LEP Board level; items with a high risk profile being highlighted to the Board.**
- **Asked for consideration to be given as to how to embed the risk register into the BLEP Board and staff members' working lives.**

8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING - To be confirmed