



## **BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP (BLEP) BOARD MEETING**

Held Thursday 30 July 2020 from 9.30am, via Teams

- Present:**
- Andrew M Smith, Pinewood Studios (Chair)
  - Philippa Batting, Buckinghamshire Business First
  - Adrian Brown, Berkeley Strategic Land Limited (Part meeting)
  - Lucy Edge, Satellite Applications Catapult
  - Michael Garvey, Chandler Garvey
  - Alistair Lomax, Arc Universities Group
  - Eman Martin-Vignerte, Bosch (Part meeting)
  - Clare Pelham, Epilepsy Society
  - Emma Potts, University of Buckingham (Part meeting)
  - Clr Steve Bowles, Buckinghamshire Council
  - Clr Steve Broadbent, Buckinghamshire Council
  - Clr Isobel Darby, Buckinghamshire Council
  - Clr Nick Naylor, Buckinghamshire Council
  - Clr Martin Tett, Buckinghamshire Council (Part meeting)
- Apologies:**
- Hiren Gandhi, Blaser Mills
  - Richard Harrington, BLEP Chief Executive
- In attendance:**
- Professor Gavin Brooks, Buckinghamshire New University (Skills Advisory Panel Chair)
  - Kevin Hoctor, BEIS South Central & West
  - Claire Hunter, Buckinghamshire Council
  - Lisa Michelson, Buckinghamshire Council
  - Ian Barham, BLEP Partnerships Manager
  - Caroline Perkins, BLEP Research Manager
  - Heather Dean, BBF Head of Skills and Business Support
  - Sarah Fraser

## **SUMMARY MINUTES**

- 1 **WELCOME**
  - Gavin Brooks was welcomed to his first BLEP Board meeting, attending as an observer in his capacity as Skills Advisory Panel Chair. Lisa Michelson was also welcomed as an observer in her capacity as a lead economic development officer at Buckinghamshire Council.
- 2 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
  - Alistair Lomax confirmed his role is representing the 10 universities involved in the Arc Universities Group, his employment being handled by Cranfield University. He requested Section 151 Officer advice re possible conflicts in Arc-wide vs individual university discussions.
  - Andrew Smith declared he has been appointed as a member of the Department of International Trade's Creative Industries Trade Advisory Group.
- 3 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS – 22 May, 16 June, 17 July 2020**
  - The minutes of the above meetings were agreed as accurate records of proceedings.
- 3.1 **Matters arising:**
  - **'Aviation Skills to Film' initiative** – Discussions on this initiative are progressing and it is hoped to receive funding for a pilot scheme.

- **Digital Strategy** – This strategy will be brought to the Board for discussion in September.
- **Woodlands** – BLEP Board members have attended the Aylesbury Vale Advantage Legacy Board with a view to expediting planning discussions around the Woodlands site.

#### 4 **BUCKINGHAMSHIRE ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN**

- Further to discussion at previous meetings, the Board was reminded LEPs have been tasked with leading on the development of Economic Recovery Plans, with the Buckinghamshire LEP Plan due to be brought to the Board for approval at its meeting in September.
- The Plan will build on the Local Industrial Strategy and will be informed by the economic evidence base being compiled reflecting three stages to recovery: Response (to the current crisis); Renewal (how businesses start to adapt of the ‘new normal’, making best use of Government resources); and Rebound (looking at opportunities to rebuild the economy).
- The Board noted and provided comment on the presentations given on the evidence base underpinning development of the Recovery Plan; and the Growth Hub’s response to the COVID-19 impact on Buckinghamshire businesses.
- Private sector Board members offered their thanks to Buckinghamshire Council for the exemplary level of support offered to businesses during the current crisis and the outstanding service offered by Local Authority officers. The Board emphasised the need for the ambition expressed in high level discussions to be cascaded through the Local Authority to ensure alignment of policy with ambition.
- The Board also offered thanks to the Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF) team for the outstanding support offered to businesses within the county, especially during the last few months. The clear benefits of BBF operating within the county have become ever more apparent during the pandemic, in supporting businesses but also in bringing forward the business voice to galvanise policy change.

#### **The Board:**

- **Approved the high-level outline Recovery Plan framework for development as presented.**
- **Requested the draft Recovery Plan be shared with Directors before the final version is presented for approval at the Board meeting on 18 September.**
- **Requested the evidence base is fully inclusive and reflects all parts of the Buckinghamshire community; the Recovery Plan must have diversity at the heart of all proposals.**
- **Agreed the Recovery Plan must be bold, adopting a “visionary” approach.**
- **Requested the executive complete a “lessons learned” exercise around the Recovery Investment Fund identifying process improvements that can be made by the LEP/applicants in future.**

#### 5 **CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S REPORT**

- The Board noted the contents of the Chief Executive’s report, previously circulated.

##### 5.1 Chair/Vice Chair Recruitment

- The Board endorsed the appointment of Adrian Brown as Vice Chair for the Buckinghamshire LEP, with a 3 month handover from 1 September from Michael Garvey, outgoing Vice Chair.
- With regards to Chair recruitment, Board members voiced concerns around the loss of experience and knowledge to the LEP as key members of the Board step down and members of the executive team are absent from the organisation.
- **It was agreed to investigate a possible further extension to AS’s tenure as Chair of the BLEP, both with Pinewood Studios and with Government.**

##### 5.2 Silverstone Heritage Experience Loan

- The Board noted the paper provided and acknowledged the delay in construction, the subsequent delay in opening the Silverstone Heritage Experience Centre due to COVID-19, and the revised visitor numbers due to the implementation of social distancing measures.
- In line with other funding partners, the BLEP Board agreed to defer loan repayments by 12 months to 2022, and that a reduced interest rate of 2.5% be applied between May 2021 and May 2022.

- 5.3 Funding Awards
- Where BLEP makes funding awards for businesses to obtain professional advice, it was suggested it would be most appropriate if this advice is sought from Buckinghamshire based businesses.

- 5.4 Getting Building Fund
- An announcement is due from the Secretary of State on 3 August regarding the schemes to be progressed under the Getting Building Fund.

- 5.5 England's Economic Heartland (EEH) Transport Strategy
- A draft response to the EEH draft strategy will be shared at the Board meeting on 18 September, the consultation running until 6 October.

## 6 **SKILLS HUB UPDATE**

- Gavin Brooks provided context to the establishment of the Skills Advisory Panel (SAP) and the scale of the challenge being faced in terms of skills in Buckinghamshire.

### 6.1 Redundancy Taskforce

- In response to COVID-19, a task and finish Redundancy Taskforce has been established drawing from SAP membership, to address the needs of employers and employees in the face of rising job losses. The Taskforce will look at the challenges facing all sectors, will provide a single point of reference for all information, and will look at the opportunities for upskilling/retraining to meet requirements of those sectors still recruiting.

### 6.2 Careers Hub

- Board members congratulated the Skills team on achieving the position of top performing Careers Hub in the country for the second year running.

### 6.3 Skills Strategy

- The Skills Strategy, first created in 2018, is to be refreshed in the coming months in light, particularly, of COVID-19; the updated Strategy will be shared with the BLEP Board at a future meeting.

### 6.4 Recruitment

- The Board noted the recruitment for a Workforce Skills Manager to support the work of the Skills Hub, the SAP and the Redundancy Taskforce; this will be a key role in recovery discussions going forward.

## 7 **DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

Friday 18 September 2020, 2-4.30pm, Board meeting, Bosch Innovation Hub or via Teams

Friday 4 December 2020, 9.30am, Board meeting, Pinewood Studios or via Teams