

CONFIDENTIAL

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LEP (BLEP) CAPITAL PROGRAMME SUB GROUP BRIEFING

Held Friday 13 November 2020 from 3.30pm via Teams

Present:	Michael Garvey	(MG)
	Cllr Steven Broadbent	(SB)
	Adrian Brown	(AB)
	Hiren Gandhi	(HG)
	Richard Harrington	(RH)
Apologies:	Clare Pelham	
In attendance:	John Rippon	(JR)
	Sarah Fraser	(SF)

MINUTES

ACTION

1 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (Briefing session) – 4 September 2020

The minutes from the Capital Programme Sub Group briefing session held on 4 September were agreed as an accurate record.

1.1 Matters arising

A355 – JR to forward a copy of the letter sent from Andrew Smith to Inland Homes asking them to work proactively with the LEP and Buckinghamshire Council to progress delivery of the link road.

JR

2 LOCAL GROWTH FUND (LGF) PROGRAMME UPDATE

2.1 Summary

Further to the report circulated, JR provided an overview of the LGF programme, now in its final year. Overall programme spend to the end of the current year second quarter was reported as £54.3m against a programme total allocation of £60m. This is a good achievement to date and it was anticipated the LEP will achieve 100% expenditure by the year end.

However, it was noted expenditure in the current year is behind forecast at the end of quarter 2, and that figures presented assume £10m for transport priority schemes has been spent and funding paid over to Buckinghamshire Council; which to date is not the case. This situation remains under close review by the LEP and Buckinghamshire Council to ensure full expenditure by the year end.

It was suggested the LEP has done well in terms of both generation of programme and in pivoting ie reallocating funding where projects have been unable to meet targets, supporting the LEP's profile as being agile and swift to address issues arising.

With regards to transport projects, it was suggested these have been problematic for the LEP, exacerbated by a lack of control and apparent lack of cultural buy in from promoters. These projects will be reviewed at programme end to bring together lessons learned to apply to future programme expenditure. It was suggested the fundamental lessons to be learned are around relationships with promoters and how the LEP might take greater control.

With regards to future programme, it was hoped to have a range of suitable projects available requiring funding, a clear framework on milestones/deadlines, and improved relationships with promoters to ensure clarity on the need to meet these milestones.

2.2 Projects update

The Sub Group noted the excellent progress with the **Satellite Applications Innovation Centre** and the associated highways improvements made on the access to Westcott, which will also help facilitate future development at the site.

With regards to the **Stoke Mandeville Healthcare Innovation Hub**, the Sub Group noted the deviation to the initial proposal ie creating a brand new purpose built building rather than refurbishing an older building to provide the Hub; this being done with no additional impact on spend and on the understanding that the building will be constructed and ready for occupation by end March 2021.

Following a pause earlier in the year due to COVID-19, and to subsequent Getting Building Fund and additional LGF support, it was anticipated construction on the **AI centre at Buckingham** will commence February/March 2021; expenditure taking place as soon as terms of the LGF loan have been finalised.

With regards to **Transport priority schemes** (formerly overseen by the Local Transport Body) the overriding commitment being sought from the promoter is for expenditure of remaining funds by end March 2021; regular discussions are being held with Buckinghamshire Council to achieve this.

Further to discussion at the last LEP Board meeting regarding the **Eastern Link Road South**, further delays in securing planning on the Aylesbury Woodlands site have been incurred resulting in Buckinghamshire Council being unable to meet LGF grant offer conditions. The council has requested a variation to the offer and virement of funds to ensure in year expenditure. Funding to be used to:

- Reimburse Bucks Advantage's planning promotion costs;
- Land acquisition costs directly relating to delivery of the ELR(S); and
- Funding towards Woodlands roundabout (30% contribution) – noting a ransom strip will be held between the roundabout and the land on which the road will be built.

The Sub Group requested JR/RH clarify with Buckinghamshire Council that the land acquisition costs referred to do not include the cost of buying the land on which to build the road.

JR/RH

Discussions with Inland Homes re delivery of the **A355 Beaconsfield Link Road** are ongoing, with community groundswell of negative opinion growing about Inland Homes' failure to deliver this road in a timely manner, particularly from the Beaconsfield Society, and the Sub Group questioned the possibility of involving Joy Morrissey MP.

The Sub Group noted the work undertaken on the **Bucks Creates @ Pinewood** project to progress meaningful discussions between the promoter (Bucks New University) and their delivery partner (Creative Media Skills) which will allow both parties to continue to jointly operate from the facilities at Pinewood. To expedite the project a further grant of £30k from LGF headroom is requested as a contribution towards additional building costs which will, in turn, increase scheme outputs and benefits.

It was confirmed work is progressing on the **Silverstone Pedalling Efficiency Project** with a procurement specification underway for new facilities at the innovation hub with the intention of drawing down funds early 2021.

2.3 Recommendations

The Sub Group:

- **Supported the request to delay a decision on reallocating £1.09m LGF grant from A40 London Road corridor to the Westhorpe A404 Globe Park project pending availability of further information from Buckinghamshire Council. JR to bring a recommendation to the Sub Group when there is greater clarity on the final ask.** JR
- **Subject to clarification around land acquisition costs (as above), agreed to support Buckinghamshire Council's request to the Buckinghamshire LEP Board for a viement of £9.96m LGF grant attached to the Eastern Link Road South scheme, as set out in the informal Council documentation of 4 November 2020. This to be discussed at the LEP meeting on 4 December.** RH
- **Supported recommendation to the LEP Board to approve an additional LGF capital grant of £30k to the Bucks Creates @ Pinewood project as a contribution towards the cost of building work in return for increased outputs.** RH

3 **GETTING BUILDING FUND UPDATE**

JR confirmed the first half of the Getting Building Fund allocation has now been received and work is underway to finalise legal agreements with individual promoters.

The Sub Group noted the progress being made with each of the projects, the possible issues around match funding associated with the proposed expansion to the NFTS, and the decision by BT not to invest further funds into the Phase 3 extension to the Rural Broadband project.

With regards to the NFTS it was suggested framing the expansion as a community project which may attract further investors. JR/RH to provide an update following further discussion with the NFTS w/c 16 November.

JR/RH

It was noted that the Getting Building Fund is still in its very early stages and reporting systems to MHCLG are being established. The second half of the funding allocation is due after April 2021.

4 **LGF EVALUATION FRAMEWORK – HATCH REGENERIS REPORT**

The Sub Group noted the initial draft LGF evaluation framework from Hatch Regeneris previously circulated, and noted that the aim is to complete evaluation work by the end of December in time to feed into the next Annual Performance Review (date tbc).

The Sub Group acknowledged the need to develop the confidence in a range of partners to bring forward large scale programmes, building projects/capacity outside of Buckinghamshire Council, providing a wider spread of project generation.

Building on this, it was suggested the LEP must in future step back from project generation, adopting a far greater “gatekeeper” role, imposing tighter project deadlines on sponsors, and being prepared to walk away from projects promoters cannot deliver.

It was considered a clearer picture is required on what the LEP is trying to achieve with the Local Industrial Strategy/Economic Recovery Plan etc, in turn offering a clearer picture on projects needed to deliver economic growth. It was suggested the planned meeting of the BBF Board and private sector LEP Board members may assist in this thinking.

The Sub Group requested:

- **Hatch Regeneris include thoughts on what the LEP has done well to date and what could be improved in the future.** JR
- **The inclusion of a specific section on Project Generation/Identification learning.** JR

5 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 Chair Handover

It was agreed JR will contact AB to provide a full briefing in advance of AB taking over the chairmanship of the Capital Programme Sub Group with effect from the next meeting. JR

AB offered his thanks to MG for his chairmanship of the group to date.

6 DATES OF 2021 MEETINGS (all 2-4pm)

- 16 February
- 13 May
- 4 August
- 9 November