
Title:	Buckinghamshire Growth Board Programme
Purpose:	To update board members on the Growth Board programme including the development of the Buckinghamshire Growth & Recovery Deal, the Buckinghamshire Vision and Digital Strategies.
Recommendation(s):	For members to note the content of this report and comment on the proposed role of BLEP in supporting the dialogue with Government around the Buckinghamshire Recovery & Growth Proposal, the Buckinghamshire Vision and Digital Strategies.
Impact on Risk Register:	The partnerships supporting and the delivery of the Buckinghamshire Recovery & Growth Proposal are important for future programme. It is important that we respond clearly to the feedback from Government to ensure that productive relationships can be maintained. Excellent digital connectivity is fundamental to a successful economy, a clear strategy for delivery and implementation will help support critical future investment.

1 Buckinghamshire Growth & Recovery Deal

As highlighted at the December meeting of this board a submission was being made to Government on behalf of the Buckinghamshire Growth Board and delivery partners for a Growth and Recovery Deal for Buckinghamshire. A copy of the document submitted to Ministers is attached as **Appendix 1** to this report.

Running parallel to this, Metro Dynamics have been running a series of workshops with local partners to strengthen the proposals for investable propositions in 6 areas of focus; Westcott Space Cluster, Silverstone, Aylesbury Garden Town, High Wycombe Town Centre and Skills Investment.

Following a commitment in the House of Commons by the Prime Minister for the Buckinghamshire Recovery & Growth Proposal to be considered by Ministers an initial meeting was held with officials from MHCLG and BEIS on Monday 18th January. The Government Delegation was headed by Emran Mian the Director General for Decentralisation and Growth at MHCLG and also featured Kris Krasnowski the Head of the Ox Cam Arc Unit and Rowena Limb the Director for Local Growth in the Cities and Local Growth Unit.

Richard Harrington and Philippa Batting were both invited to attend this meeting which was helpful in providing some initial feedback on the Recovery & Growth Proposal. Government officials advised that the proposals were very much welcomed, but needed to be further refined to demonstrate the unique assets of Buckinghamshire and in the case of the skills proposals needed to be reviewed against the recently released White Paper objectives. Officials also reaffirmed the Government's commitment to the Oxford Cambridge Arc.

A follow up meeting is now being arranged as a matter of urgency with Ministers from both BEIS and with MHCLG to ensure that a productive dialogue is maintained ahead of the March budget announcements.

BLEP have been pursuing a direct dialogue with Government in support of the Westcott DISC facility, a short “non-technical” briefing document has been produced to share with Ministers and Officials a copy of which is attached as **Appendix 2** to this report and a series of briefings are being arranged to further the case for investment at Westcott.

2 Buckinghamshire Vision

“Growing our people, our places, our potential” Buckinghamshire Strategic Vision 2050 has been commissioned by the Buckinghamshire Growth Board to consider how the Growth Board would like the area to develop over the next 30 years.

The vision is :-

By 2050 Buckinghamshire will grow as a thriving, resilient and successful county; where our residents and businesses can reach their best potential, growth is delivered sustainably, and environmental enhancement is achieved to support a high quality of life for our communities.

Underpinned by our diverse local economy and super growth sectors, our highly valued environmental infrastructure and our depth of cultural and heritage offerings, each central to our communities’ health and wellbeing, Buckinghamshire will be recognised as a vibrant place to grow your skills, your business and your family.

Buckinghamshire’s location within the South East will be capitalised on to generate investment and deliver exceptional connectivity to our distinctive local destinations and landscapes. The unique opportunity presented by our strong, stable and effective partnerships will enable this strategic vision to be delivered in a truly integrated way.

This vision is underpinned by 4 main objectives:-

- Expressing a shared ambition and focus by setting the commitment and direction to improve the economic, environmental and social health of Buckinghamshire
- Telling the compelling narrative for Buckinghamshire by using our single voice to make clear our willingness to engage and deliver sustainable and ambitious growth. Setting out what our priorities are and where we wish to go to deliver long-term change
- Setting the strategic direction and overarching guidance that has previously been absent to enable the shared 2050 goal to be achieved in all future plans, strategies and frameworks
- Establishing our identity nationally and in the context of the wider South East region by bringing together our successes, future opportunities and challenges

A copy of the draft Strategic Vision is attached as **Appendix 3** to this report and members are invited to provide comments to support a formal BLEP response to the Growth Board on this draft.

3 Buckinghamshire Digital Strategy

In 2020 this board provided feedback on an early draft of a proposed Digital Strategy for Buckinghamshire, primarily focussed on the economic need for improved digital infrastructure and skills training this draft strategy was well received by this board. Subsequent to this, it was agreed that the scope of this strategy should be broadened to incorporate a wider community and societal focus given the critical importance of digital infrastructure and services in all aspects of our life.

The broader scope of the revised Digital Strategy was approved at the Buckinghamshire Growth Board in November and has benchmarked over a dozen Digital Strategies from other Local Authorities and LEPs across the UK and has now been expanded around the theme of connectivity. Each of the included segments are also intended to quickly convert into an action plan. The included chapters are now focused on:

- Connected Communities
- Connected Economy
- Connected Buckinghamshire
- Connected Council

The current working draft of the strategy is attached as **Appendix 4** to this report, Jack Douglass will be presenting an update on the strategy at the Board Meeting and would welcome feedback on the draft format and content as part of the sign off process for this strategy.

Board members are asked to:

- i. **Note the content of this report and comment on the proposed role of BLEP in supporting the dialogue with Government around the Buckinghamshire Recovery & Growth Proposal and to endorse the draft Buckinghamshire Vision and Digital Strategies.**