

Buckinghamshire

LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP

THE ENTREPRENEURIAL HEART OF BRITAIN

Buckinghamshire LEP Draft Business Plan 2021/22

The draft business plan for Buckinghamshire LEP was initially developed following a virtual staff awayday in December 2020, featuring a collaborative session with a number of key partners and stakeholders. The plan is underpinned by six main themes that emerged from that discussion:-

1 To Establish the Strategic Framework for Economic Growth

A primary role for Buckinghamshire LEP is to provide insight to guide and inform the economic strategy for the county and to work alongside key delivery partners including the Buckinghamshire Business First Growth Hub and Buckinghamshire Council to ensure aligned delivery against strategic objectives. We have key roles to perform as thought leaders and convenors, to develop and maintain collaboration both within Buckinghamshire and beyond and to on occasion deliver strategic activity where others are unable or unwilling to do so.

We will ensure that funding and other resources are secured to help deliver the economic ambitions to support sustainable growth in Buckinghamshire and will ensure that those resources are managed effectively in line with the requirements of government and other funding bodies.

2 To Deliver Insight & Knowledge Exchange

Providing Authority & Insight to inform decision making:

We will ensure that Buckinghamshire LEP is recognised as the authoritative and reliable source of economic data for Buckinghamshire. We will co-ordinate and critically analyse national, regional and local economic information to demonstrate what this means for the Buckinghamshire economy using access to business networks through our Bucks Business First Growth Hub and other partners. We will enable the development of a collaborative and open-access data observatory that is of true value for Buckinghamshire businesses and networks.

Underpinning policy direction by the LEP and Partners:

We will use this data and insight actively support and shape the strategic policies of the LEP and to help guide and shape the policy direction of Buckinghamshire partners, including through the Buckinghamshire Growth Board.

Buckinghamshire LEP will also take a proactive role in helping to coordinate sub-regional and national economic data working closely in partnership with neighbouring LEP's and the national LEP Network.

3 To Collaborative Activity & Influence Effectively

Buckinghamshire Investors – Central Government – LEPS - National Agencies -MP's – Delivery Partners:

LEPs were established to help provide local commercial insight to support the development and delivery of economic policy, securing national funds for deployment at a local level. This role remains central to our outlook. We are only able to do this if we continue to develop strong partnerships across Buckinghamshire and meet regularly to listen to the needs of all businesses, business networks and representative organisations.

Through our now established board sub group structures, sector network groups and through our Enterprise Zones and Growth and Skills Hubs we have excellent connections with our wider business base. We will seek to build on these solid foundations using the insight, knowledge and connections of our Board members effectively to gain a deeper insight from key investors and potential investors in Buckinghamshire, to strengthen relationships with national Business Representative Organisations and to deepen our dialogue with high growth firms in Buckinghamshire, particularly within our priority sectors published in the Buckinghamshire Local Industrial Strategy and Economic Recovery plan.

We will use our network to develop and strengthen economic collaborations within Buckinghamshire and to help inform our briefings with the Buckinghamshire MP's, government officials and national agencies with the aim of shaping national policy and future investment in Buckinghamshire working across a number of sub-regional structures relevant to the growth of our economy.

4 To Deliver Economic Growth & Future Prosperity

As the UK develops new international trading relationships following the departure from the European Union and as the country continues to manage the impact of the Covid 19 crisis it is important that we continue to focus on the delivery of our Economic Recovery Plan to support the strong rebound of our economy following the removal of lock down restrictions.

We will need to establish a new baseline outlining the impact of the Covid 19 crisis and continue to implement our 5 year recovery plan to support the "Respond: Renew: Rebound" of the Buckinghamshire economy helping to resource and co-ordinate the activities of delivery partners.

2021 will be a pivotal year for renewal with the long-awaited launch of the Shared Prosperity Fund, further investment in the Levelling Up Fund and in supporting innovative businesses to spot and develop new opportunities and pivot their operations into new ways of working or into new working.

We aim to focus on four areas of business activity:

- Essential business/start up support

For many years the national policy framework has been focussed on business scale-up rather than start up programmes, this has been particularly true in areas such as Buckinghamshire with low levels of unemployment and economic inactivity. 2020 saw that change with a large increase in the claimant count figures in Buckinghamshire and people in previously secure employment seeking new opportunities. As an area steeped in an entrepreneurial culture it is not surprising that we also saw a large level of new business registrations and patents in Buckinghamshire over the past year. We will support a renewed business support programme, seeking flexibility as part of a pilot from the Shared Prosperity Fund, with a direct focus on start-up activity to ensure that those new businesses are given the tools to survive and thrive.

- New ways of working – new innovation

Our recovery programme is not based on doing the same things as before, businesses have had to adapt and undertake new ways of working to survive. How this is done will be different for all businesses but often will require innovation and adaptability, we will strengthen our relationships with organisations such as Innovate UK, the UK Research Council and with Universities and academic institutions to ensure that our businesses have the access to specialist support to facilitate the introduction of new and innovative working methods and techniques that provide increased resilience and adaptability. We will in particular focus this activity on businesses operating within our key sectors and within our Enterprise Zones and strategic business locations.

- Smart investment and training

As part of the Buckinghamshire Skills Hub we will be developing the Skills Action Plan to direct the training support available to businesses and individuals. There is likely to be an increased demand for more responsive and shorter bite-sized training packages for people looking to re-skill or up-skill at this time. For many businesses there is the risk that the training and apprenticeship programmes that they have been undertaking will be at risk in the current economic climate and that they will see these as areas to cut to minimise costs. It is important that our Skills Action Plan highlights ways in which essential training can be delivered flexibly and smartly so that Buckinghamshire businesses are able to attract, retain and develop their skills base at this time.

- Infrastructural Investment – Digital Investment – Enterprise Zones – Innovation Hubs and Town Centres

Further work is required to develop the key business infrastructure in Buckinghamshire. Although significant improvements have been made to digital infrastructure over the past 5 years, largely driven by LEP led investment, there is still further progress required to deliver the seamless digital and cellular connectivity required to support business growth, we will support this investment by the implementation of our new Digital Strategy and effective rollout of our broadband and 5G investment programme. Enterprise Zones and Town Centres will be a focus for this investment helping to create hubs for clusters of innovative businesses linked to our key growth sectors in a network of accessible and well-equipped innovation hubs that have been supported by Local Growth fund investment.

It is vital that we work closely as part of the Buckinghamshire Growth Board to support a direct dialogue with Government around a place-based Growth Deal and that this deal accurately conveys the economic needs that we have already identified.

5 To be Communicated effectively with direct and tailored Messaging

- Winning the Levelling Up Battle

It is important that the needs of Buckinghamshire businesses and the benefits of investment in Buckinghamshire are effectively communicated to government and other investing partners. As a LEP we are a convenor of the Buckinghamshire business community into Government. We will need to be clear about how this investment will provide a timely and direct return and will ultimately support new national investment priorities in light of a refreshed National Industrial Strategy and help address important policy issues including the levelling-up agenda, green and sustainable growth and international trade.

To support this approach we will review our communications plan to identify new channels of communication utilising digital resources more effectively and providing our spokespeople including all board members with the clear messages to be conveyed.

6 To secure the resourcing for sustainable growth

To deliver the plan and to be in a position to pitch for new programmes of funding we will need to ensure that all of our current resources are effectively utilised including core funding LGF, Getting Building Fund and other grant funding, gainshare and other retained income and retained business rates from our Enterprise Zone activity. We will also need to ensure that additional resources provided for our Growth Hub and Skills Hub activities are appropriately aligned with our identified strategic needs. These resources will need to be developed to help provide a sustainable income for our long-term growth, our staffing structure will need further development to provide further Finance, Governance and Strategic Growth roles to support this ambition.

New national funding streams including pilot projects for the Shared Prosperity Fund and the Levelling Up fund will be launched this year and our planning will need to focus on the main financial events including the Autumn Spending Review that will inform these investments. We will need to ensure that our propositions are well developed in line with the programme and national strategic priorities, that their impacts are clearly defined and deliverable and are easily understood across Whitehall.

Action Plan Timeline for 2021/22 –

Month	Internal Action	External Factor	Process & Staff Lead	Category(Governance, Delivery, Strategy, Partnership)	Resources Required & Available
Jan 2021		Criteria Announced for Levelling Up Fund & Shared Prosperity Fund	Need to review criteria, consider status and relative strengths of submission proposals and share with board. (RH/IB)	Strategy	
		Exit from the European Union	Growth Hub contract with BEIS to provide advice for businesses in relation to new working arrangements, funding to be agreed and staff recruited for intensive work period Jan-Mar 2021. (PB/CP)	Delivery	£140k BEIS Grant Secured Jan 2021
	Recruitment to staff posts for Governance & Finance Role and Digital/Strategy lead. Continue Board Recruitment including commencement of Chair Recruitment		Need to finalise recruitment and HR processes with You HR including staff handbook, pension arrangements and contract documentation. Ensure agreement of operational practices with partners in particular BC for staffing roles Undertake assessment of potential candidates, promotion of new opportunities via team and board networks. (RH/IB)	Governance	You HR support provided via extended contract.
	Complete first Bucks Business Barometer Survey		Template Questions prepared, Growth Hub Survey Team briefed and businesses selected, Survey	Strategy	In-House

			Analysis and Presentation to Board and wider networks. (CP/JM)		
	Complete production of Annual Report and Circulate to Key Stakeholders		Finalise production, secure accounts information, get sign off by Chair & CEO and agree publication & distribution schedule (RB/IB)	Governance	Production support provided by BBF as part of MOU Arrangement
	Complete annual calendar of meetings and prepare business plan and annual budget.		Time to be allocated at daily team meetings to ensure plans are assessed as a team and that all team members contribute. Host joint meeting of private sector board members. (SF/RH)	Governance	
	Board Meeting January 29th		Papers to be Circulated Jan 22nd (IB/ALL) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annual Budget - Business Plan - Capital Programme Recommendations - Annual Performance Prep - Recovery Deal / Vision/ Digital Strategy 	All	
Feb 2021	Annual Conversation February 8 th		Pre-submission required by January 20th, briefing session to be arranged for Chair and S151 Officer and review of any areas of concern with Cities and Local Growth Unit (RH/IB/JR)	Governance	
	Annual Financial Accounts to be Prepared ahead of Budget		Briefing to be arranged with external accountants, ensure close liaison with BC Accounts and S151	Governance	Richardson's contracted to prepare accounts

			team – to be ready for AGM (IB/CH)		
		Woodlands Planning Application at BC Strategic Planning Committee (25 th February)	Pre-briefing with key stakeholders, provide support for BC executive in Member Briefings, support landowner agreement to enable post planning allocation of LGF funds. Ensure political support for discussions with DEFRA and Environment Agency. Future direction and role of BA to be agreed (RH/AS)	Delivery	Resources required for future viability of BA
	Complete MOU Between Bucks LEP and BBF		Review of existing contractual and financial arrangements, clarify process and timescale for reviewing and managing MOU particularly in light of new funding opportunities and work commitments facilitated by Bucks LEP. (IB/RH/PB)	Governance	Legal Support required.
	Connected Counties Broadband Programme Delivery Concludes		Undertake review of works completed to date and the appropriate governance and assurance practices which will need to be completed to successfully close out the contract. (JD/JRob)	Delivery	Support provided from wider Broadband Team in BDUK and HertsCC
	Complete Draft of Digital Strategy		Ensure working draft is in agreed format to conclude engagement prior to presentation to Growth Board in March 2020.	Strategy	External review of final draft report may be needed

Mar 2021		Budget Statement March 3rd	Undertake programme of lobbying and engagement with key stakeholders with primary focus on the DISC facility at Westcott (RH/IB/AS)	Partnerships	Henhan Consultancy engaged on monthly retainer.
	Bucks LEP AGM March 2nd		Confirm speakers, prepare accounts and presentation material and promote to stakeholders. Arrange hosting arrangements with BBF marketing & Events Team (IB/RB/RH)	Governance/Partnerships	Use of BBF Events Software required.
	Broadband Voucher Scheme Ending		Ensure widespread promotion to all eligible communities, processing of all applications to BDUK team. (JD/JR)	Delivery	
	Submit 2020/21 Skills Report to DfE		Report to be shared with SAP Jan 21, amends and feedback incorporated into final draft (CP/JM)	Strategy	
	Skills Hub Website to be Launched		Complete development and testing, launch at the AGM, post launch promotion to user groups (RB)	Delivery	£25k allocation approved through Skills Budget
	Stoke Mandeville Hospital Innovation Centre to be completed		Support for virtual opening and promotion to potential occupiers (JR/RB/BBF)	Delivery	
		Current Programme of Covid Emergency Business Support Concludes	Growth Hub Support for BC in promotion and signposting of Government Funding support. (PB/All)	Delivery	

	Annual Financial Arrangements Completed		Ensure all HMRC, Pension and Companies House registrations are completed on schedule and accurately (F&GM)	Governance	
		Enterprise Zone Business Rate Relief Expiry (31 March 2021)	Ensure maximum site occupation ahead of rate relief deadline (AS)	Delivery	
	Bucks LEP Board Meeting March 26 th		Papers Required by March 19th (possible agenda) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Skills Report - Covid Economic Recovery Plan Review - Post Budget Review - Shared Prosperity Fund / Levelling Up / Devo White Paper - EZ – MOU 	ALL	
April 2021					
	Publish 2020/21 Local Skills Report		Report to be shared on LEP and Skills Hub Websites and promoted widely to stakeholders (CP/JM/RB)	Strategy	
	Enterprise Zone 5 Year Review (2016-21), New 5 Year Implementation Plan (2021-26) and MOU Refresh Final Report to EZ Board 20 th April		Independent assessment of programme to be commissioned and reviewed by EZ Board and Government Sponsors, new MOU agreement focusing on strategy for allocation of Enterprise Zone funds to be agreed between Bucks LEP and BC (AS/RH)	Delivery/Governance	Hewdon Consulting Commissioned in January 2021 to Undertake Review

	Local Growth Fund End of Programme – Deadline for all Committed Expenditure to be Claimed		Undertake “flipping” strategy with GBF programme to ensure full funding commitment claimed. Primary Focus on, Road and Roundabout Contribution, recovery of BA Costs and land acquisition strategy following Woodlands Planning approval. (JR/AS)	Delivery	
	Growth Hub Annual Submission to BEIS		Review to be checked against agreed MOU and targets for 2021/21 aligned with LIS and Economic Recovery Plan targets. (IB/RH)	Delivery	
	Bucks Business Barometer		Assessment & Interviews Completed results published and shared with partners (CP/JM)	Strategy	
		Building Digital UK, DCMS, announcement of digital infrastructure procurements and support schemes	Undertake reviews of suggested procurement areas and timelines to ensure these meet local priorities. Promote new voucher schemes. (JRob)	Delivery	
	Buckinghamshire Rural Business Broadband Project delivery commences		Undertake consistent reviews of project progress and premises impacted. (JRob)	Delivery	
May 2021					
	Bucks LEP Board May 21st		Papers Ready May 14th	ALL	

			- Levelling Up & Shared Prosperity Fund Submission Proposals		
	Bucks Business Awards		LEP Award Sponsor for Covid Innovation Category – promotion shortlisted nominees to wider networks to capitalise on association	Partnership	
June 2021	Briefing and Engagement for new Elected members of Buckinghamshire Council		Induction & welcome pack prepared for all new members, support for potential key site tours, presentation to scrutiny meetings and one to one briefings for new Cabinet Members (IB/RB/RH)	Partnerships	
July 2021		Potential Second Budget Statement - non-covid focus	Undertake programme of lobbying and engagement with key stakeholders with primary focus on the DISC facility at Westcott (RH/IB/AS)	Partnerships	
	Bucks LEP Board July 1st		Papers Ready June 24th - Budget Response - Levelling Up Fund and Shared Prosperity Fund Final Submission Approval	All	
		Potential delayed Local Authority Elections		Partnerships	
	Bucks Business Barometer – to also include 1 st annual assessment of Bucks Recovery &		Assessment & Interviews Completed results published and shared with partners (CP/JM)	Strategy	

	Resilience Fund Impact				
	Shared Prosperity and Levelling Up Fund Submission		Bids to be externally assessed for viability and deliverability, relative submissions to be agreed with Growth Board and through Bucks LEP Board processes.	Strategy/Delivery	
Aug 2021	Annual Staff performance Review to be completed and targets for forthcoming 12 months to be set		Process for remuneration to be approved by REMNOM Sub Group. Appraisal targets for team members to be shared across the team structure (ALL)	Governance	
	Target for Recruitment for new LEP Board Chair to be completed		Interviews to be conducted June - August – Handover to commence and be completed by December 2021	Governance	Potential recruitment of head-hunter service
Sept 2021	LEP Mid-Year Review with Cities and Local Growth Unit		Advance Papers to be prepared, quarterly submissions to be made to LGF & GBF processes and to be approved by Capital Sub Group.	Governance	
	Scrutiny / External Audit		Agree programme for external scrutiny and audit to be completed by Accountable Body (F&GM)	Governance	
	Annual Report for 2020/21 to be published		All to contribute to editorial board to discuss content and format. Timetable for pre-production and design engagement to be prepared. (RB/All)		Budget to be allocated and review of design options to be considered.
	Host Partner Roundtable Forum/Event		Covid restrictions allowing – host LEP partner forum at Enterprise Zone site to supplement digital	Partnership	

			AGM held earlier in the year. (IB/RB)		
Oct 2021					
	Bucks Business Barometer		Assessment & Interviews Completed results published and shared with partners (CP/JM)	Strategy	
		Spending Review	Pre-spending review engagement with MP's and with Government Departments - targeted lobbying process to be undertaken alongside Bucks Growth Board and regional partners for priority initiatives. (RH?IB)	Strategy	
	Growth Hub Annual Submission mid-year assessment		Ensure alignment with BBF/LEP MOU and with strategic needs identifies through LIS and Economic Recovery Plan and any new Industrial Strategy processes (IB/RH)	Delivery	
	Skills Show		Support participation and awareness of the event, maximise coverage and awareness from Board and key partners Ensure current LMI data is available and used for show programme(All)	Delivery	
	Bucks LEP Board October 8th		Papers Ready October 1st - Spending Review Submission	All	
Nov 2021					
	Submit 2021/2022 Local Skills Report to DfE		Report to be agreed by SAP and LEP Board prior to submission (CP/JM)	Strategy	

	Annual Performance Checks		Ensure all internal compliance checks complete, annual refresh of Board Members Declarations and Officer Submissions Complete (F&GM)	Governance	
	BBF AGM		Support preparation and promotion of event to LEP Network (ALL)	Governance/Partnerships	
		UN Climate Change Conference		Strategy	
Dec 2021					
	Bucks LEP Board December 3 rd		Papers Due November 26 th - New Chairs Priorities - Annual Review Preparation	All	
	Publish 2021/22 Local Skills Report			Strategy	
	New Chairman to be in Place		Process of induction complete and agreement with new Chairman of priorities for year ahead to be fed into team awayday. (RH)	Governance	
	Buckinghamshire Rural Business Broadband Project delivery completes		Undertake review of works completed to date and the appropriate governance and assurance practices which will need to be completed to successfully close out the contract. (JRob)	Delivery	
Jan 2022					
	Annual Accounts to be Produced			Governance	Accountants/Auditors to be appointed
	2022/23 Business Plan to be Agreed		Following full team engagement and awayday in December 2021	All	

	Annual Calendar of Events to be Agreed			Governance	
	Bucks Business Barometer		Assessment & Interviews Completed results published and shared with partners (CP/JM)	Strategy	
Feb 2022					
Mar 2022					
	Broadband Programme End of Programme Assessment		Full report from BDUK on End of Life Programme for Phases 1 & 2 of Connected Counties Programme (J.Rob)	Delivery	
	Getting Building Fund Deadline		Completion of capital expenditure (J.Rip)	Delivery	
	AGM			Governance	