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<b>Title:</b>	<b>Business Plan Alignment, Service Level Agreement &amp; MOU with Buckinghamshire Business First.</b>
<b>Purpose:</b>	<b>To update board members of the aligned business plan objectives of Buckinghamshire LEP and to share the draft Service Level Agreement providing greater transparency to underpin the working relationships with Buckinghamshire Business First as the designated Growth Hub service provider for Buckinghamshire and support partner for Buckinghamshire LEP.</b>
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>i. That members endorse the aligned business plan priorities for 2021/22 and comment on the draft Service Level Agreement between Buckinghamshire LEP and BBF and delegate responsibility to the Finance &amp; Audit Sub Group to approve the final SLA and MOU agreements.</b></li><li><b>ii. Approve funding of £53,651 from the LEP Reserve to support the delivery of the Skills Hub Programme in 2021/22.</b></li></ul>
<b>Impact on Risk Register:</b>	<b>An increasing proportion of Government Funding for LEPs is being allocated to Growth Hub services. The Risk Register has identified that more robust contractual arrangements are needed to ensure that the allocation of this funding is managed more effectively. The SLA and MOU between the two organisations will help to formalise the effective working arrangements and will ensure that our current partnership arrangements are fully transparent and open to external scrutiny.</b>

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- 1 LEP Business Plan** - The outline Business plan for 2021/22 was presented to the LEP Board meeting in Jan 2021 – and has since been shared with the Buckinghamshire Business First Board and the Buckinghamshire Council Economic Development Team. The business plan has now been extended to include operational output measures and resources allocations as requested by the Board, a copy of the final plan is available on the BLEP website. In addition, a business plan canvas has also been produced, this highlights the areas of alignment with the business plans of partners and is attached as **Appendix 1** to this report.
- 2** As part of the business planning process it has been agreed that the contract and partnership arrangements between BLEP and our key partners are more clearly defined. This is to help demonstrate complete transparency in our financial arrangements, particularly in relation to the delivery of our Growth Hub and Skills Hub services provided by Buckinghamshire Business First, much of which are funded by BLEP through Government Grants or through other national funding programmes such as through the Careers and Enterprise Company.

- 3 New Service Level Agreements and Memorandums of Understanding will help to provide clarity around the services to be provided on behalf of the LEP by our partners, they will also help with monitoring arrangements and will support in the reporting process for investing organisations. Furthermore, they will also help ensure that we have fully auditable processes now that we are operating as an independent limited company in line with the recommendations of the national review of LEP Assurance and Accountability framework.
- 4 As part of its terms of reference the Finance & Audit Sub Group have been asked to look at the partnership and contract arrangements between the LEP and its key partners. An updated Memorandum of Understanding with Buckinghamshire Council for Accountable Body and Financial support services was approved in November 2020 and the Sub Group wanted to ensure that similar arrangements were in place with Buckinghamshire Business First, a requirement that was endorsed by this Board as part of a review of the BLEP risk register at the January board meeting. Over the past few weeks it has been agreed that there should be two separate documents between the two parties, a Service Level Agreement to cover the financial and contractual arrangements between the two organisations and a Memorandum of Understanding that would not be a legally enforceable contract but would serve to establish the joint objectives of the two partner organisations and to set out in more detail how the two organisations will work together to deliver common objectives.
- 5 The draft SLA Contract is attached as **Appendix 2** to this report and will outline the terms of agreement between the two organisations for the three main service delivery areas:-

  - Growth Hub Services
  - Skills Hub Services
  - BLEP Support Services

The SLA will also include an annexe covering the schedule of outputs agreed with BEIS for the Growth Hub programme in year.
- 6 The MOU will be presented to the next meeting of the Finance and Audit Sub Group. This will detail the joint economic objectives of the two organisations and their alignment and will also outline in greater detail the joint working arrangements and in particular the monitoring and reporting processes for this board and for other funding partners.
- 7 In future years it is proposed that the MOU and SLA are refreshed on an annual basis in Q4 and are presented to the Sub Group to review and recommend for adoption by this board.
- 8 At the last meeting of this Board the Skills Hub programme was considered in detail and it was agreed that the full budget for the Skills Hub Programme be presented to this meeting. This budget covers the operating costs for the Skills Hub Programme and is attached as **Appendix 3** to this report. The total anticipated cost for delivering the Skills Hub Programme is estimated to be £268,257 over the next 5 years and Board are asked to approve an allocation of **£53,651** for the 2021/22 year.

**Board members are asked to:**

- i. Endorse the aligned business plan priorities for 2021 and comment on the draft Service Level Agreement between Buckinghamshire LEP and BBF and delegate responsibility to the Finance & Audit Sub Group to approve the final agreements.**
- ii. Approve funding of £53,651 from the LEP Reserve to support the delivery of the Skills Hub Programme in 2021/22.**