

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

Held Friday 27 May 2022 from 9.30am via Teams

- Present:** Andrew M Smith, Pinewood Studios (Chair) Richard Harrington, BLEP Chief Executive  
Philippa Batting, Buckinghamshire Business First Eman Martin-Vignerte, Bosch  
Adrian Brown, The Berkeley Group plc Cllr Martin Tett, Buckinghamshire Council  
Lucy Edge, Satellite Applications Catapult Cllr Gareth Williams, Buckinghamshire Council  
Hiren Gandhi, Blaser Mills
- Apologies:** Clare Pelham, Epilepsy Society  
Martina Porter, All Spring Media  
Prof James Tooley, University of Buckingham  
Cllr Steven Broadbent, Buckinghamshire Council
- In attendance:** Kevin Hctor, BEIS/DLUHC, Cities and Local Growth Unit  
Robert Curtis, BEIS/DLUHC, Cities and Local Growth Unit  
Richard Ambrose, Buckinghamshire Council (Section 151 Officer)  
Ian Thompson, Buckinghamshire Council  
Ian Barham, BLEP, Partnership Director  
Rachel Daley, BLEP, Innovation and Digital Programme Manager  
Sarah Fraser

**SUMMARY MINUTES**

- 1 **MATTERS ARISING – 8 APRIL 2022 BOARD MEETING**
- 1.1 • **Enterprise Zone funds:**
- The Audit & Finance Sub Group, meeting on 14 June 2022, will discuss principles around future utilisation of Enterprise Zone funds against BLEP operational costs.
  - Buckinghamshire Council is due to consider and, if appropriate, sign off the Memorandum of Understanding re management of Enterprise Zone receipts.
- 1.2 • **Reserves** – Following discussion at the last meeting, it was confirmed the LEP is holding sufficient reserves to meet any winding up liabilities, if required in future; Government having now confirmed core funding of £375k for the coming year (dependent upon submission of a suitable delivery plan).
- 1.3 • **Growth Hub funding** – The Audit & Finance Sub Group will consider future Growth Hub funding at its meeting on 14 June and will bring forward a recommendation to the BLEP Board at its next meeting.
- 1.4 • **Bucks Advantage** – Adrian Brown/Clare Pelham are assisting Bucks Advantage with moving the Woodlands development forward now a planning consent has been received.
- 1.5 • **Data Centre Research** – The BLEP research team has undertaken research requested at the last meeting around the impact/benefits etc, associated with Data Centres. A briefing note has been prepared regarding the outcome of this research which will be shared with BLEP Board members and Local Authority Planning officers, for information only.
- 1.6 • **East West Rail** – A letter has been drafted to East West Railway Chief Executive reinforcing the importance to Buckinghamshire of the Aylesbury link of East West Rail.
- 1.7 • **DCMS Minister** – Andrew Smith/Martin Tett have met with Julia Lopez MP, Minister of State for Media, Data and Digital Infrastructure at DCMS, regarding the roll out of Project Gigabit, the extension of the Broadband voucher scheme, HS2’s commitment to lay 5G capability along the track route, and a request to review the level at which connectivity to housing must be provided (currently thought to be developments in excess of 19 homes).

All other actions arising had been completed, were to be discussed within the context of the current agenda or are ongoing workstreams.

## 2 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- There were no new declarations of interest at this meeting.
- With the Section 151 Officer's acknowledgment, BLEP Directors also sitting on the BBF Board will take no part in decisions around Growth Hub funding at this or future Board meetings.

## 3 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING – 8 April 2022**

- The minutes of the meeting held on 8 April 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

## 4 **LEP DELIVERY PLAN**

- Board members noted the draft Delivery Plan previously circulated and the requirement to submit the final version of this to Government by 30 June 2022 in order to facilitate release of core funding in the sum of £375k.
- No fixed format for Delivery Plans has been issued by Government; BLEP's plan follows a similar structure to delivery plans produced in previous years. The Plan encompasses the broader aspects of the LEP's agenda: digital support; skills; monitoring of capital programmes; and planned core team activity in the coming year.
- KPIs included for the Growth Hub reflect the targets for 2021/22 and are still to be finalised, recognising that 50% more funding was available in 2021/22 than is currently available for 2022/23.

### **The Board:**

- **Endorsed the direction of travel within the draft Delivery Plan, and delegated authority to the Executive to progress to the final version of the plan.**
- **Requested Adrian Brown undertake a last review of the final version of the Delivery Plan prior to this being submitted to Government by 30 June 2022.**
- **Requested the executive and Skills Advisory Panel members (and partners such as Bucks College Group) seek to address the mismatch between areas of Buckinghamshire with relatively high unemployment, and sectors in the county in short supply of people, looking at specific interventions to try and match these two cohorts.**

## 5 **DIGITAL INNOVATION PLAN**

- The Board noted the draft Digital Innovation Plan previously circulated and suggested making reference in the Plan to the support available for companies/products to enable them to progress quickly from testbed to something that is operational.

### **The Board:**

- **With the inclusion of the above, approved the Digital Innovation Plan, as presented.**

## 6 **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT**

### 6.1 LEP Network Update and Integration Plan

- The Board noted the work underway with the LEP Network around integration of LEPs following the publication of the Levelling Up White Paper and the completion of the LEP Review. Given the complexity of these discussions, it is anticipated the process will continue to the end of 2024 and consideration will be needed on how to sustain LEP activity in the interim.
- Discussions around integration will form a substantive item on the agenda for the 22 July 2022 BLEP Board meeting. In the meantime, the executive team will continue to work with officers in Buckinghamshire Council and BBF, seeking to preserve and conserve those areas that Buckinghamshire does well, in addition to looking at those areas where things could be improved with the additional funding to be gained through a County Deal.
- Until negotiations with Government are complete, BLEP remains an independent, constituted company; Directors having responsibility for existing projects.
- BLEP's track record on delivery, the strong strategic platform established via the Local Industrial Strategy/Economic Recovery Plan, and the strong relationship with the Local Authority were noted.

## 6.2 Capital Programme Update

- The Board congratulated the executive team on 100% expenditure against the LEP's capital programme; the actual result being better than 100% due to project funds being repaid and recycled.
- A number of events, eg the Westcott Space Expo, are planned over the summer to demonstrate what has been achieved through the LEP's capital programme.

## 6.3 UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

- Buckinghamshire Council (with support from the LEP and BBF) has overall responsibility for development of the framework for deployment of future UKSPF funds to meet local needs and opportunities; UKSPF being the replacement for EU structural and social funds. The framework is to be completed and submitted to Government by the beginning of August 2022.
- Discussions with officers from Buckinghamshire Council, BLEP and BBF are ongoing re deliverable priorities to be addressed with funding available; c£8m UKSPF vs €14m from EU funds previously (noting Government is providing additional funds to meet other priorities). The outcome of these discussions will be brought to the BLEP Board and Buckinghamshire Council informal Cabinet in July.

## 6.4 Growth Hub

- Board members noted the Audit & Finance Sub Group will consider the reduced level of core funding confirmed to support the Growth Hub service and the impact this will have on programme delivery.
- Whilst the focus is on securing a County Deal for Buckinghamshire, it was suggested there are also opportunities to secure significant private sector funds to put towards the county's objectives.
- At a recent MP briefing the Growth Hub facilitated discussions with private sector organisations on how to properly resource the work of the Destination Management Organisation in the county, supporting the hospitality and tourism sector in Buckinghamshire, "raising the profile of place".

## 6.5 Skills Update

- Board members offered their thanks to Prof Gavin Brooks for his service as Skills Advisory Panel (SAP) Chair, and the contribution he has made to the skills agenda in Buckinghamshire; Martina Porter taking up the mantle of SAP Chair to see the SAP transition to a Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP).
- Government has mandated that development of LSIPs is to be led by a business representative organisation. The most recent meeting of the SAP endorsed BBF providing this lead for Buckinghamshire, supported by SAP members and Buckinghamshire College Group.
- One area of focus for the skills team going forward will be looking at the ability to link high growth areas with areas of deprivation, in part in recognition of the fact that Buckinghamshire currently has more vacancies than people looking for jobs, and yet the claimant count remains high, particularly in town centre areas. This work will follow on from the successes seen in Buckinghamshire as a result of the Kickstart Programme, and parallel conversations that are taking place with the police service with a view to possibly running a pilot around how to divert people, early into criminal activity, along a different life path. This agenda is also a key focus for Buckinghamshire Council, with a new Deputy Cabinet member recently appointed, who will be working closely with the BBF/Skills Hubs teams to ensure a coherent Bucks approach.
- Board members noted the SEND Skills Show to be held at the Guttman Centre in June, supported by 20 employers and providing a quieter space for young people with SEND requirements who may have been overwhelmed with the main Skills Show held earlier in the year. It is hoped that this event will be an exemplar for similar events in the future.
- The "Set For More Futures" event to be held at Pinewood on 18/19 November will offer opportunities to Buckinghamshire (and other areas') young people interested in a career in the creative industries.

## 6.6 Communications update

- The Board noted the update provided and the upcoming events, including the opportunity to visit the Local Growth Fund supported cycling rig at Silverstone Sports Engineering Hub on 17 June.

- The Westcott Space Expo taking place on 28 July will offer the opportunity to showcase the investment that has taken place at Westcott, the unique nature of the facilities and capacity offered at the site, the cluster continuing to grow and covering design, applications, testing, etc.
- The launch of the National Space Strategy in 2021 demonstrates Government's support for the sector and recognises the importance of space in everything to do with connectivity, location setting, image transfer, collection/sharing of climate change information, etc, etc. The UK has a target to achieve 10% of the world's space economy (currently at c6%), but the size of the total 'pot' continues to grow, and an enormous amount of effort is required simply to maintain the current position. The sector offers enormous scope and growth is needed in all areas, but all those involved across the UK will need to work collaboratively to maximise the opportunities available, particularly if the UK withdraws from ESA (European Space Agency).

#### **The Board:**

- **Noted the Chief Executive's report.**
- **Endorsed the appointment of Martina Porter as Skills Advisory Panel Chair.**
- **Requested information on Buckinghamshire's share of the global Space economy (the UK currently holding 6% overall).**
- **Suggested it would be useful for the LEP/Enterprise Zone representatives to meet with Patrizia to discuss the future of the Westcott site.**
- **Agreed to hold the 22 July BLEP Board meeting at Westcott.**

#### **7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Nothing of note.

#### **8 FUTURE BOARD MEETINGS**

- **Board meetings (9.30am-12pm) - 22 July, 30 September, 9 December 2022.**
- **AGM (9.30-11am) – 15 November 2022.**