

Agenda item 8 Chief Executive's Report

Title:	Chief Executive's Report
Purpose:	To provide an update on the operational activities being managed by the LEP Team since the last board meeting (May 2022).
Recommendation(s):	For members to note the content of this report and approve the Risk Register attached as Appendix 2 to this report.
Impact on Risk Register:	The Risk Register is included within this report.

Audit & Finance Update

The Audit and Finance Sub Group (AFSG) met on July 11th. The primary function of this meeting was to consider a presentation from Buckinghamshire Business First seeking a LEP contribution to offset the reduction in government Growth Hub funding for the current financial year. Ahead of making any decision the Sub Group has requested further information on the sustainability of the Buckinghamshire Business First operating model in the light of changing national funding priorities and further clarification into the impact of additional funding being provided by the LEP. A verbal update will be provided by Sub Group members at the Board meeting.

The AFSG meeting also received an update to confirm that the core LEP Funding of £375k for 2022/23 had been approved and that the necessary documentation to claim this funding was submitted and acknowledged on July 13th prior to the government's July 15th deadline.

The first external advisory audit of the incorporated LEP is now being undertaken by Richardson's Accountants, the findings from this audit will be shared at the next Sub Group meeting in September. Members will have the opportunity to meet with Richardson's, independent of the Executive, prior to the finalisation of the advisory audit.

We have recently been advised of a change of Section 151 officer at Buckinghamshire Council. Richard Ambrose is stepping down from this role and is being replaced by David Skinner. We have arranged an induction briefing for David over the coming weeks, but I wanted to pass on my personal thanks to Richard Ambrose for his fantastic support for the LEP in this role since our inception. He has been at our side at our annual performance reviews each year, has offered supportive advice for the Chairman and has always professionally and effectively supported our funding and performance monitoring returns throughout the year, often with very tight deadlines.

REMNUM Update

The RemNom Sub Group (RNSG) met on 8th July to receive an update on the LEP Performance Review Document that sets both LEP and Staff objectives for the coming year. HR issues relating to the Integration Plan workstream were discussed and lawyers Sharpe Pritchard have been commissioned to advise the LEP on the due diligence issues that will need to be covered. Recruitment continues for both the Finance Manager and Enterprise Manager roles and following the recent resignation of the Digital Innovation Manager a further recruitment process has commenced. RNSG also requested that Board recruitment

recommence, as we currently have three vacancies, and were particularly keen to attract candidates from academia and from the financial services and investment sector and would welcome interest from candidates from businesses operating in innovative Net Zero technologies.

LEP Network Update

A LEP Network Conference and dinner with government ministers was held on 27th June. Four ministers were in attendance throughout the day including the dinner and all were very positive about the role they wanted LEPs to play in ensuring the local business voice is represented at a local democratic process and were clear that alongside the LEPs' changing delivery roles one of the core functions would remain to inform, advise and where necessary challenge partners on place based economic strategies and delivery.

The government has recently published an integration plan template, previously circulated to the Board. While the plan calls for initial submissions by 29th July, Ministers have agreed to consider plans as and when they are ready for submission, though officials are keen to have a sense of where things are heading by the end of July, hence the date.

Opportunities Bucks Levelling Up

Buckinghamshire Council have requested that partners formally sign up to the attached vision **Appendix 1** and attach logos to the document as a visible manifestation of commitment. The levelling up priorities identified in the document are complementary to those of building and delivering upon economic growth and wider employment creation opportunities that currently forms the core of the BLEP economic programme and I would recommend that the Board endorse this response to the government's Levelling Up policy.

Growth and Skills Hub Update

We have been working alongside colleagues from Buckinghamshire Council to support the Buckinghamshire development prospectus for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. LEP and Growth Hub representatives participated in a stakeholder workshop event held on June 16th to identify the priority interventions for investment and we have been supporting the identification of desired programme outcomes utilising the experience gained through the current European Investment programme.

The Buckinghamshire submission for the £5.8m allocation is to be made by the beginning of August and if approved the first calls for projects could be issued by this autumn.

The Skills Advisory Panel met in person at the Aylesbury Waterside Theatre on July 8th, this meeting followed on from the Annual Careers Lead Annual Conference in which head-teachers and careers leads from schools received a presentation from Nicola Hall the Director of Education at the Careers and Enterprise Company who advised how Buckinghamshire's deep commitment to skills and careers training ensured that we would be able to deliver the requirements of the new Provider Access Legislation that comes into force later this year.

Enterprise Zone Update

I met with Chris Sills of MEPC on 21st June to discuss advancement of the next progress stage of development at Silverstone Park now that phase four is nearing completion. Chris has replaced Roz Bird in the development manager role at Silverstone. Phase five will be the most prominent phase of development at the Enterprise Zone site as it abuts the Dadford Road opposite the entrance to the Circuit. MEPC are correspondingly considering enhancing the design details of the latest units on this frontage.

While their current phase of development comprises smaller units and is on the circuit MEPC report continued strong demand for larger floorspace footprints on the Enterprise Zone and subject to demand remaining strong would look to implement the reserved matters application currently being campaigned upon consent which they estimate will be late summer earlier autumn.

The LEP has jointly commissioned consultants Genecon, along with MEPC to produce a strategic outline business case for an incubation village to support R&D and innovation at Silverstone Park as the centre of a nationally significant technology cluster. A draft final report was received on 23rd June and is currently under review. Also, on the 23rd BRDC hosted a visit of LEP board members to share their plans for further developing the R&D testing capability of the Circuit particularly in respect of Electric Vehicles.

At Westcott R&D capability continues to grow with the imminent opening of the Catapult's latest facility at Plot 4000 and the nearing of completion of the Drone Port Testing Facility. At Woodlands the BA Board are jointly with Taylor Wimpey progressing a reserved matters application for phase 1A which comprises the expansion of the Woodlands roundabout. The Board are further seeking agreement to a disposal strategy with the landowner and have asked BC to confirm road delivery arrangements now that the scheme is consented and has successfully passed the judicial review challenge period.

Risk Register

Following the publication of the Levelling Up White Paper and conclusion of the LEP Review the Risk Register has been refreshed to remove resolved risks associated with those policy directives. The updated risk register is included as **Appendix 2** to this report.

Communications Update

Over 300 people have already pre-registered for the Westcott Expo event taking place on July 28th, all board members are welcome to attend. The Westcott Space Cluster Expo will showcase the achievements of companies operating on-site alongside their pioneering products and services and their bold vision for the future. The theme this year is enabling space innovation which will offer attendees a fantastic opportunity to watch technology demonstrations and take in the fascinating tours of new specialist engineering facilities. The event starts at 9.30a.m. and the morning will provide the opportunity to learn from space sector experts whilst the afternoon session includes tours of the new facilities being managed by Westcott Space Cluster members. Further details of the event programme can be found via the attached link. [Westcott Expo](#)

Buckinghamshire LEP were recognised as one of the “big hitting” LEPs in the recent [Place Matters](#) Report published by the Creative Industries Council. The report welcomed the lead that Buckinghamshire LEP had shown through our capital investment programme and strategic leadership in support of this growing sector.

Over the next couple of weeks, the draft copy for the LEP Annual Report will be shared with all Board Members, this copy will form the basis for the interactive online report identified in the Delivery Plan progress report.

Board members are asked to: Note the content of this report and approve the updated Risk Register attached as Appendix 2.