

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

Held Friday 11 February 2022 from 10am, at Buckinghamshire Council Offices,  
The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, Bucks HP19 8FF

**Present:**

<p>Andrew M Smith, Pinewood Studios (Chair) Richard Harrington, BLEP Chief Executive Philippa Batting, Buckinghamshire Business First Cllr Steven Broadbent, Buckinghamshire Council Cllr Martin Tett, Buckinghamshire Council Cllr Gareth Williams, Buckinghamshire Council</p>	<p>Adrian Brown, The Berkeley Group plc Lucy Edge, Satellite Applications Catapult Hiren Gandhi, Blaser Mills Eman Martin-Vignerte, Bosch Clare Pelham, Epilepsy Society Martina Porter, All Spring Media</p>
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**Apologies:** Prof James Tooley, University of Buckingham

**In attendance:** Kevin Hctor, BEIS/MHCLG Cities and Local Growth Unit  
Prof Gavin Brooks, BNU (Skills Advisory Panel Chair)  
Richard Ambrose, Buckinghamshire Council (Section 151 Officer)  
Ian Barham, BLEP, Partnership Director  
Bharti Bhoja, BLEP, Head of Finance and Assurance  
Caroline Hargrave, BLEP, Research Manager  
Sarah Fraser

**SUMMARY MINUTES**

**1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- Richard Harrington declared an interest in discussions relating to Silverstone Interactive Museum.

**2 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING – 3 December 2021**

- With an amendment from Clare Pelham to her declaration of interest, the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2021 were agreed as an accurate record.

**2.1 Matters arising (not covered elsewhere on the agenda):**

- 2.1.1 • **Bucks Net Zero Audit** – A consultant has been appointed with work to be undertaken over the next quarter to set a benchmark against which to monitor progress going forward.
- 2.1.2 • **DiT** – Subsequent to discussion with DiT, Buckinghamshire’s contribution to national inward investment spend related to film and high end television production spend will be more actively recognised in future.

**3 MULTI-YEAR BUSINESS PLAN AND BUDGET** (Lucy Edge, Hiren Gandhi and Adrian Brown joined the meeting)

- The Board noted the paper provided and the likely future direction of travel for LEPs, as indicated in the Levelling Up White Paper; the formal outcome of the LEP Review still awaited.
- Funding for capital delivery programmes is unlikely to be channelled through LEPs going forward and no confirmation has been received re core funding to support LEP operation, although should Government asks LEPs to deliver particular functions then funding should follow.
- As required by Government, BLEP has established its own legal identity and, as such, must have due regard for ‘going concern’ questions.
- A detailed budget/business plan will be brought to the next meeting addressing questions re the work the LEP might undertake, required staffing levels, value for money, etc.
- Board members noted the risks facing the LEP, suggesting now is the time to demonstrate, and support as boldly as possible delivery of, a clear vision for what is needed to deliver the local “regional” agenda.

**The Board:**

- **Agreed the principles outlined for development of a multi-year budget/business plan.**
- **Requested detailed budget/business plan be brought to the next meeting for approval.**
- **Agreed to revert with any suggested amendments to the “Key Messages” circulated.**

### 3.1 Levelling Up White Paper

- The Board noted information shared on the Levelling Up White Paper and reflected on Bucks' track record around: R&D/innovation; and corraling messages from the business community/business representative organisations, Buckinghamshire's reach into its business community being exceptional.
- Regeneration remains a Bucks focus, particularly around town centres, reflecting Government's focus on "Pride In Place". More work is to be done on internationalisation/"Global GB"; a key BEIS priority.
- Appropriate attention must also be given to the Skills White Paper which overlaps at several points with the Levelling Up White Paper and may offer opportunities to Buckinghamshire.

### 3.2 Buckinghamshire Growth Board

- **Board members noted and endorsed the Buckinghamshire Growth Board document "Succeeding as a Place: Achieving Our Shared Vision For Buckinghamshire to 2050".**

## 4 **LOCAL SKILLS REPORT 2022/23**

- The Board noted the paper/update provided on the work of the Buckinghamshire Skills Advisory Panel (SAP), and development and publication of the Local Skills Report.
- Comments from the Board on these included:
  - The need to maintain a consistent message into Government around sector focus, not just geographical, eg the 45,000 people needed in the Creative Industries by 2025.
  - More work is required to address mismatches of sectors where workers are in short supply and pockets of deprivation in the county where people cannot find employment.
  - There is a mismatch between courses education providers find economic to deliver, and skills employers require. Work around Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPS) linked to the Strategic Development Fund may help fund uneconomic courses.
  - More needs to be done by Government to ensure appropriate funding is available for apprenticeships if providers are to deliver all the courses required.
  - More work is needed to ensure school curriculum drives expectations on the types of jobs students can undertake, demonstrating the value of these to the economy.
  - Buckinghamshire must be responsible for defining "local need" in terms of skills as this may not be immediately obvious to those not within the county. The current SAP/Sub Groups operate and continuity in this structure would be of benefit.
  - It would be useful to have a broader discussion about individuals and the pathway for young people through learning into employment making this accessible for all.
  - There is a need to consider under-employment in Bucks eg the number of people with degrees unable to find employment in their chosen field and taking jobs for which they are over-qualified.
  - More needs to be done through the Skills Hub to discuss apprenticeship options in schools prior to students making A Level choices.

#### **The Board:**

- **Asked Gavin Brooks/Caroline Hargrave to consider what freedoms and flexibilities might usefully be requested from Government to assist in delivering the skills agenda and addressing issues raised.**
- **Noted the contents of the Buckinghamshire Local Skills Report, undertook to promote the work of the SAP and support the call for the SAP structure to be evolved to meet the needs of LSIPS.**

## 5 **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT**

Further to the report previously circulated, the Board noted:

- BLEP's **Annual Performance Review** with Government took place on 7 February 2022, the focus largely on programme delivery. A few governance issues have been noted around exemptions associated with the LEP Review, but no issues of concern were raised, and the formal note of the meeting is awaited.
- The **Secretary of State for Education, The Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP**, visited Pinewood Studios on 10 February 2022. BLEP Board representatives took the opportunity to discuss local skills priorities and demonstrate the work taking place on the ground in the county.

- **Growth Hub feedback:**
  - **Buckinghamshire Skills Show** takes place at Westcott Venture Park on 9/10 March 2022. There are currently 5,000 young people booked to attend with over 100 businesses due to take part. The event has also been opened up this year to older people who are currently unemployed, transitioning between jobs/sectors, etc.
  - A **Future Tourism Summit** will be held on 2 March 2022 at the Waterside Theatre in Aylesbury. This will be the launch event for a programme of support going into the tourism and hospitality sectors, including support provided through the Community Renewal Fund until the end of June 2022.
  - The **Buckinghamshire Business Festival** will be running from 7-18 March 2022 with a significant amount of activity planned.
  - Businesses are reporting increasingly tough operating conditions. Support is being offered to inspire business to adapt and innovate to meet the changing economic landscape. Those businesses that have built in resilience and flexibility over the last few years are faring better than those that have not. Issues with border controls continue to impact business operation, access to supplies, and import/export.
- The **Enterprise Zone** programme continues to make good progress at Westcott and at Silverstone, with Aylesbury Woodlands now progressing to planning committee, the Environment Agency having lifted its objection. It was suggested more needs to be done to capture the benefit of organisations coming out of the Enterprise Zones that, in scaling up, move to alternative locations.
- **Chair recruitment** will recommence following receipt of the final LEP Review outcome.
- **Digital Innovation Plan:**
  - The Digital Innovation Plan and an update on gainshare resources available will be brought to the Board meeting on 27 May 2022.
  - It is disappointing that BDUK chose to clawback funding that had originally been intended to remain within the programme.
  - Further discussion needed re infrastructure specs to provide resilient, fit for purpose systems.
  - HS2's decision not to lay fibre cabling along the route of the new track (as originally agreed) is extremely disappointing.

**The Board:**

- **Noted the Chief Executive's report and the updated Risk Register attached.**
- **Delegated authority to Andrew Smith/Cllr Martin Tett to consider and, if appropriate, approve any further negotiated change in loan repayment schedule from Silverstone Interactive Museum following sight of additional due diligence.**

**6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- The Board offered its best wishes and thanks to Caroline Hargrave and Bharti Bhoja for their work on behalf of Buckinghamshire LEP, this being their last meeting.

**7 FUTURE BOARD MEETINGS**

- **Board meetings** (9.30am-12pm) - 8 April, 27 May, 22 July, 30 September, 9 December 2022.
- **AGM** (9.30-11am) – 15 November 2022.