

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

Held Friday 9 December 2022 from 9.30am at the National Film and Television School,
Beaconsfield Studios, Station Road, Beaconsfield, Bucks HP9 1LG

Present: Andrew M Smith, Pinewood Studios (Chair) (Part meeting)
Philippa Batting, Buckinghamshire Business First
Adrian Brown, The Berkeley Group plc
Jenny Craig, Bucks College Group
Lucy Edge, Satellite Applications Catapult (via Teams)
Hiren Gandhi, Blaser Mills
Richard Harrington, BLEP Chief Executive
Eman Martin-Vignerte, Bosch (Part meeting)
Clare Pelham, Epilepsy Society (Part meeting)
Martina Porter, All Spring Media
Cllr Steven Broadbent, Buckinghamshire Council
Cllr Martin Tett, Buckinghamshire Council (Part meeting)
Cllr Gareth Williams, Buckinghamshire Council

In attendance: Jon Wardle, NFTS (Part meeting)
Chris Smith, Plastron (Part meeting)
Charlie Young, Plastron (Part meeting)
Graham Schultz, Plastron (Part meeting)
Ross Burton, BEIS (via Teams) (Part meeting)
Robert Curtis, BEIS/DLUHC, Cities and Local Growth Unit (via Teams)
Claire Hunter, Buckinghamshire Council (representing Section 151 Officer)
Ian Barham, BLEP, Partnership Director
Sarah Fraser

SUMMARY MINUTES

1 WELCOME

- Andrew Smith offered the Board's thanks to Jon Wardle for hosting the meeting at the National Film and Television School (NFTS), noting that the NFTS, if not the top school of its kind in the world, is certainly in the top 3, and is a source of great pride for Buckinghamshire.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- Andrew Smith declared Pinewood Studios is supporting the NFTS in a bid to Government for funding.
- Noting no funding decisions were to be made at this meeting, Philippa Batting, Eman Martin-Vignerte, and Hiren Gandhi declared an interest in discussions around BLEP funding for the BBF Growth Hub.

3 NATIONAL FILM AND TELEVISION SCHOOL UPDATE

- Jon Wardle welcomed the Board to the NFTS, providing an update on activity being progressed at the NFTS and commenting that the school has had an excellent year, culminating in recently being awarded degree-awarding powers, and signing contracts with Amazon and Channel 4.
- Through StoryFutures the NFTS has worked with partners on projects to ensure the UK creative workforce is the world's most skilled in the use of virtual, augmented and real-time production technology for immersive storytelling, recognising this is a growing area within the sector.

4 NEW BLEP BOARD MEMBER

- The Board welcomed Jenny Craig, attending her first BLEP Board meeting as a BLEP Director. Jenny shared a little of her background, leaving corporate banking some 16 years previously to join the world of Further Education, joining Bucks College Group (BCG) in July 2022.

- She also shared a little of BCG's work in supporting the needs of Buckinghamshire's key sectors, in addition to providing a broad range of other FE options, reflecting that Government's recently announced FE skills review under the control of Sir Michael Barber, may bring further changes.
- FE being one of the only sectors required to respond to the LSIP, BCG will provide an annual statement of the plans in place to address issues identified in the LSIP. Work being undertaken by the college to develop a new curriculum-led strategic plan will also play to support this.

5 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING – 30 September 2022

- The minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

5.1 Matters arising (not covered elsewhere on the agenda):

- 5.1.1 • **DCMS Create Growth bid submission** – Following discussion at previous meetings, it was reported this bid had been unsuccessful.

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

6 AUTUMN STATEMENT REFLECTIONS

- Further to the paper provided, it was noted confirmation of core LEP/Growth Hub funding for 2023/24 is still awaited; confirmation had been expected pre-Christmas, but this is now looking unlikely.
- It was considered the focus for the Autumn Statement had reverted to levelling up and it was anticipated this will be reflected in the Budget and within departmental funds. News that East West Rail will continue to receive funding and that Government will deliver on previous commitments was welcomed. Board members noted that clarity continues to be sought on the Aylesbury link to East West Rail and that Rob Butler MP has been instrumental in lobbying for this on behalf of the county.
- The Board reflected on the increased emphasis being placed on networking across regions/the country and the increased importance of wider sector partnerships.
- The Board questioned what steps Buckinghamshire can take to unlock funding to develop homes on brown field sites, as outlined by Rt Hon Michael Gove MP in his letter of 5 December.

The Board:

- **Supported the actions outlined for the LEP in the paper previously provided.**

7 ECONOMIC STRATEGY REFRESH

Further to the paper provided and to robust discussion, it was agreed:

- The focus must be on delivery with pace to drive the local economy, rather than developing strategy documents further, looking at how to pool resources to better effect, recognising that further central Government funding is unlikely.
- LEP strategies have provided the framework to allow businesses to develop and to accelerate this development, in addition to "lighting the future fires to allow investment to flow"; the LEP's role being around strategic interventions that would not otherwise be delivered.
- The Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) produced has been an extremely successful strategy in guiding investment in Buckinghamshire and remains largely fit for purpose, requiring only a light touch refresh and consideration of an implementation plan for initiatives previously identified but not yet delivered.
- The evidence base supporting LEP strategies may benefit from some updating, again on a very light touch basis, ensuring this is fit for purpose to support development of the LSIP, and to facilitate discussion and decisions around significant interventions to boost the local economy.
- The LEP must do everything in its power to unlock the Woodlands and Westcott sites.
- There is a need to look at how to create bridges into more deprived wards in the county so that opportunities are accessible to all.
- To look at opportunities arising around the green economy and where this fits with priority sectors eg green propulsion, battery technology, hybrid technology developments.

- To progress a more active and proactive comms strategy detailing what is needed in Buckinghamshire.
- Considerations around the future workforce will underpin many of the LEP's strategies and this link must not be lost.
- It would be useful to look at how the LEP's evidence base can help inform the Local Plan currently in development and the latest iteration of the Local Transport Plan to be considered in January, particularly when considering the key drivers to help SMEs thrive.

The Board requested:

- **A very light touch refresh of the LIS and the evidence base supporting this be undertaken in the next few months.**
- **In tandem with this refresh, that a paper be brought to the Board at its 27 January 2023 meeting recommending interventions to be undertaken by the LEP at pace that will significantly impact the Buckinghamshire economy.**

8 PLACE-BASED ECONOMIC GROWTH MODEL

- The Board were reminded of the work undertaken earlier in 2022 to progress a County Deal. With changes in Whitehall and Government's changing focus, it was reported it does not appear a County Deal for Buckinghamshire will progress in the short term. However, the work undertaken has proved to be a useful catalyst for looking at a place-based economic growth strategy in Buckinghamshire.
- To that end, discussions are taking place between Buckinghamshire Council and Buckinghamshire LEP around how best to pool resources to better effect for the county, and work is ongoing to try and articulate what this might look like in terms of structure, governance and programme.
- Board members suggested that as part of this work it would be useful to consider how the gainshare received by Buckinghamshire Council and Buckinghamshire LEP from earlier broadband interventions might be utilised, noting that these funds are not currently ringfenced for particular projects.

The Board:

- **Noted the paper provided and the current policy and funding context.**
- **Requested a paper be brought to the 27 January 2023 Board meeting providing an update/recommendations around the development of a locally led economic growth strategy, to include recommendations on how to utilise broadband gainshare funds.**

9 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

- The Board noted the contents of the Chief Executive's report previously circulated, and approved the updated Risk Register, also previously circulated.
- The LEP team were congratulated on events organised for DIT's "International Trade Week", Buckinghamshire being the only LEP to have arranged meetings. The three sessions held were considered to have been very successful.
- It was noted Buckinghamshire secured a further £344k from DIT's Internationalisation Fund, having already successfully deployed £437k; the additional funding coming from underspends in other areas around the country.

10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Nothing of note.

11 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

- **Board meetings:** 27 January, 24 March, 26 May, 21 July, 13 October, 15 December 2023
- **Audit & Finance Sub Group:** 11 January, 4 May, 21 September, 30 November 2023
- **Capital Programme Sub Group:** 13 January, 5 May, 22 September, 1 December 2023
- **AGM:** 17 November 2023