

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LEP (BLEP) CAPITAL PROGRAMME SUB GROUP MEETING**

Held Thursday 18 March 2021 from 9.30am via Teams

<b>Present:</b>	Adrian Brown (Chair)	(AB)
	Cllr Steven Broadbent (Part meeting)	(SB)
	Hiren Gandhi	(HG)
	Richard Harrington	(RH)
	Clare Pelham	(CP)
<b>Apologies:</b>	Martina Porter	
<b>In attendance:</b>	Daniel Lindsay, Hatch Urban Solutions (Part meeting)	(DL)
	Stuart Merali-Younger, Hatch Urban Solutions (Part meeting)	(SM)
	Michael Pang, Hatch Urban Solutions (Part meeting)	(MP)
	Ian Barham	(IB)
	John Rippon	(JR)
	Sarah Fraser	(SF)

**MINUTES**

**ACTION**

**1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no new declarations of interest. However, it was noted Cllr Steven Broadbent would leave the call for the Woodlands project update.

**2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 7 January 2021**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 January 2021 were agreed as an accurate record.

**3 GETTING BUILDING FUND**

Further to the report and appendices previously circulated, the Sub Group noted the level of applications received to the £2.8m open call issued on 1 February 2021 for additional projects to be supported through the Getting Building Fund (GBF); applications received totalling just over £14m.

It was confirmed applications received had been RAG rated against criteria consistent with the first round of applications:

- Strategic alignment with LEP objectives.
- Economic impact, value for money, etc.
- Deliverability recognising projects are to be delivered by 31 March 2022.

The Sub Group noted the detailed project sifting process to be implemented in assessing applications received, recognising the fund is significantly oversubscribed, and that funding is time limited.

**It was agreed:**

- **To produce a shortlist of projects recommended for further investigation, to take to the full BLEP Board on 26 March for immediate reactions to feed into the assessment process; with a request of the Board to delegate authority to the Capital Programme Sub Group to make the final decision on those projects to benefit from funding, dependent upon the outcome of full appraisal, and recognising some projects may require a Change Order process to be followed with Government.**
- **To share with the Buckinghamshire LEP Board the strategic criteria to be used in the assessment/appraisal process.**
- **To include within the assessment criteria, consideration of whether LEP funding is essential for applications to proceed, or whether projects could be completed without financial support from the LEP, considering the additionality to be gained through LEP funding.**

JR/RH

JR/RH

JR

(Stuart Merali-Younger and Michael Pang joined, and Daniel Lindsay left the meeting)

#### 4 **LGF PROGRAMME EVALUATION** (Presentation attached)

Further to the report previously circulated, SM/MP provided an overview of the scope of the LGF Programme evaluation, the findings in terms of performance, delivery and outputs, and recommendations/lessons learned to be considered in delivering future programme.

Within the recommendations listed SM/MP highlighted the need for increased capacity within the executive team, and the impact on programme of having a strong and robust application/appraisal process in place, improving initial investment decisions and possibly reducing the level of ongoing programme management required as a result.

It was noted the final version of the independent evaluation undertaken will, ultimately, be shared with Government, in part in response to discussions at Annual Performance Review; the mid year Review with MHCLG due to take place in September.

Although outside the scope of the current report, it was suggested there may be further work/analysis to do on how to unlock wider investment in projects supported through LGF (or similar) funding and how this requirement can be built into contract design.

**It was agreed:**

- **In finalising the report:**
  - **Attention should be focussed on the sections around conclusions drawn and recommendations for future activity.**
  - **The Executive Summary should be clear, simple and focussed (perhaps utilising the presentation given to the Sub Group as a starting point).**
- **To look at where LEP funding has made a real difference to projects, and where projects would have progressed without support, as a guide to future investment, recognising control does not always rest with the scheme promoter.**
- **To bring the final version of the report back to the Capital Programme Sub Group prior to this being shared with Government and wider partners.**

JR

JR

JR

(Cllr Steven Broadbent, Stuart Meralie-Younger and Michael Pang left the meeting)

## 5 WOODLANDS PROJECT UPDATE

The Capital Programme Sub Group noted the update provided on the Woodlands project; that the project had not progressed to Planning Committee due largely to the requirement for revised flood risk modelling for the Environment Agency; and that, as a result, £10m project funding will not be defrayed prior to the end of the financial year.

The Sub Group also noted the impact on the overall LGF programme; that the delay in Woodlands/Eastern Link Road South delivery may negatively affect forecast LGF outturn.

In light of local elections in May, it was suggested the Woodlands project will likely not be taken for Planning approval until July 2021.

In the meantime, it was reported the LEP has now received a request from the Health Trust for a financial contribution towards the cost of site development; no financial contribution previously being requested.

### It was agreed:

- **In advance, of any discussions, to develop a clear negotiation strategy for the LEP's engagement with Buckinghamshire Council on this project.** AB/RH
- **To seek an urgent face to face meeting with the key political leaders at Buckinghamshire Council to discuss what can be done to unlock the Woodlands project, recognising that this meeting may not take place until after local elections.** RH
- **To discuss with the Local Authority how Planning discussions are considered within the Council's Senior Management Team discussions, and whether there is the scope for the appointment of a strategic Lead Planner going forward.** AB
- **To consider whether this meeting would benefit by having a facilitator and, if so, identify possible individuals.** RH

## 6 QUARTERLY SUBMISSIONS TO GOVERNMENT

The Sub Group members noted the content of the Local Growth Fund and Getting Building Fund quarterly submissions returned to Government end February/early March.

## 7 BUCKINGHAMSHIRE RECOVERY INVESTMENT FUND UPDATE

(Cllr Steven Broadbent rejoined the meeting)

The Sub Group noted the content of the reports provided as the first assessment of the effectiveness of the grants made through the Buckinghamshire Recovery Investment Fund (at the 6 month point) and the impact these have had on the businesses supported.

In large part due to one project that did not proceed, it was reported the fund is showing an underspend of £116k.

### It was agreed:

- **To map the spread of support and impact across Buckinghamshire's geography (as well as showing this by sector and size of organisation).** IB
- **To reconcile jobs growth actually achieved with the estimates offered by individual businesses when applying to the fund, recognising it will take some time for some jobs to materialise.** IB

- **To report the £116k underspend on the fund to the Buckinghamshire LEP Board at its meeting on 26 March 2021 and seek a decision on how to utilise this money.**

**RH**

**8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Nothing of note.

**9 DATES OF 2021 MEETINGS (all 2-4pm)**

- 13 May
- 4 August
- 9 November