

DORSET LEP OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES

6 NOVEMBER 2023 FROM 11.00 AM to 12.30 PM

VIRITUAL MEETING

Committee Attendees:

Cllr Dave Bolwell (DB) (Dorset Council)
 Cllr Lawrence Williams (Chair) (LW) (BCP Council)
 Cllr Patrick Canavan (PC) (BCP Council)

Also Present:

Kathryn Hill (Dorset LEP)
 Rebecca Davies (Dorset LEP)
 Vinita Nawathe (Dorset LEP)

Apologies:

Cllr Jon Andrews (JA) (Dorset Council)

Item	Notes and Decisions	Action
1.	<p>Apologies were received from Jon Andrews.</p> <p>Declarations of interest - PC declare an interest in the Digital Skills Hub, as this is in his Ward and he is a member of the Towns Fund Strategic Board.</p> <p>LW welcomed Cllr Patrick Canavan is a new member of the Committee and everyone introduced themselves.</p>	
2.	<p>The Minutes were agreed as an accurate reflection of the last meeting.</p>	All agreed
3.	<p>Chancellor's Decision re Future Funding of LEPs and Transfer of Functions</p> <p>VN explained that since the last meeting in February the Chancellor announced his 'minded to stop funding LEPs from April 2024 and to transfer the responsibilities for those core functions into local democratic structures'. CO made the assumption that there would be no funding going forward and created a three year plan accordingly. After the 'minded to' statement back in March, Central Government started a fact finding exercise and discovered that the 38 LEPs are all different. Government cannot tell a company to close down, so they cannot just say LEPs have to go.</p> <p>VN informed that there is a form that needs to be completed for the Department for Business and Trade. This has to be filled in by one local authority on behalf of both authorities.</p> <p>LW asked VN when she expected to know what the LEP is going to do.</p> <p>VN informed that she has commissioned a piece of strategy work to be completed to make sure our economic evidence data is up to date and checking with the local authorities that our strategic priorities align. She</p>	

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3.	<p>Chancellor's Decision re Future Funding of LEPs and Transfer of Functions</p> <p>explained that there is not a definition of devolution, it is about getting larger funds from Central Government into the local area over longer timeframes and it is not for her to say or decide on that but for her to support. She is carrying on with business as usual for now until more clarity is received.</p>	
4.1	<p>Digital Skills, Innovation and Learning Hub</p> <p>RD explained that the Digital Skills Hub is a project we were awarded funding for through the Towns Fund money. We have set up the Digital Skills Hub in Boscombe and are now up and running. This is providing a community for business, local residents, with skills, job opportunities, careers decisions and support around it. After Christmas we will be there for 4 days a week. She informed that the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUC) are the ultimate funders and the Towns Fund, as a whole, has 10 projects and this is one of them. The Council has to report back on the KPIs to DLUC.</p> <p>PC said he had visited the shop and was very impressed with it but it would be great to have it more visible so more people know it is there.</p> <p>RD remarked that it is growing. A website was launched on 6 September, with associated social media. It is linked in with the Boscombe Facebook communities and the apps that support the Boscombe area. Also providing commentary and interesting ideas that are happening elsewhere in the digital arena.</p> <p>VN mentioned that, as a service, it is very citizen focussed and is something that could work well for Weymouth area.</p> <p>DB mentioned the Bridport Town Council learning centre.</p> <p>RD explained she has spoken to Bridport Town Council several times. The Bridport Learning Centre is more focussed on skills whereas Boscombe is about Skills but is also for businesses, making them more resilient. In Weymouth there is an information point that does a little of what we do.</p> <p>RD said that we would always encourage more but we want to get it right and make sure we are delivering what is needed within the community and making sure it is actually what people want. Very focussed within Boscombe and making sure we get to the right community groups.</p> <p>Action: RD to let the Committee know when the Open Day will be.</p>	RD
4.2	<p>Growing Places Fund</p> <p>VN informed that a year ago a review of the Growing Place Fund was commissioned. Some options were taken back to the LEP Board and the Board decided to continue with what the fund was first set up to do and so have opened it back up again as a revolving loan fund for people to apply.</p>	

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4.3	<p>Effects of Apprenticeships/Careers Hub Contract</p> <p>RD took the paper as read. She informed that the Dorset Careers Hub received funding to raise awareness of apprenticeships and technical education pathways for both 16 and 18 year olds. Every senior school has a senior leadership team and we need those people on side to be helping with the promotion of apprenticeships within school pathways.</p> <p>We need to make sure the local OFSTED have that awareness of what businesses are needing. All this information comes into the types of events we are delivering. We have also tried to work with teachers and taken a number out to a business to be an 'apprentice' for the day. Most teachers have always, or mainly, worked in an education situation and understanding what an apprentice would do and how a business operates is very useful.</p> <p>We are also making businesses more aware of what an apprenticeship is. Raising the profile of apprenticeships and helping people understand what a modern day apprenticeship looks like.</p> <p>We also need to work with parents. Many parents have gone to university and it was seen as the way forward, so they also don't have much awareness of apprenticeships. We are trying to show them that university is not the only way forward and how you work out what is right for you.</p> <p>RD confirmed that the Dorset Careers Hub works directly with schools and that also includes schools that are there for specialist provisions.</p>	
5	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>The Committee agreed that they would like three meetings a year, so the future meetings will be in March, July and November.</p>	

Next meeting: 22 March 2024