

DRAFT MINUTES

DORSET LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP BOARD

18 JULY 2024 AT 10.00 AM TO 12.30 PM

VIRTUAL MEETING

MINUTES

Board Attendees:

Cecilia Buffon (CB) (Chair)
Ian Girling (IG)
Jim Andrews (JA)
Cllr Millie Earl (ME)
Nicola Newman (NN)
Paul Read (PR)
Cllr Richard Biggs (RB)
Cllr Simon Clifford (SC)

Also Present:

Aidan Dunn (AD) (Dorset Council)
Anwen Jones (AJ) (Cities and Local Growth Unit)
Chris Shepherd (CS) (BCP Council)
Kathryn Hill (KH) (Dorset LEP)
Nick Webster (NW) (Dorset Council)
Rebecca Davies (RD) (Dorset LEP)
Vinita Nawathe (VN) (Dorset LEP)

Apologies:

Neil Skelland (NS)
Nick Gaines (NG)
Paul Gough (PG)
Phil Sayles (PS)
Cllr Vikki Slade (VS)

Item	Notes and Decisions	Action
1.	<p>Apologies were received for: Neil Skelland, Nick Gaines, Paul Gough, Phil Sayles and Cllr Vikki Slade</p> <p>Declarations of Interest: no declarations of interest were declared.</p>	
2.	<p>Chair's Update</p> <p>CB informed the Board that Aaron Lawes and Luke Rake have submitted their resignations from the Board.</p> <p>JA informed the Board that he is leaving BU and so Professor Keith Phalp will be taking over his position on the Board from 1 September.</p> <p>CB informed the Board that Paul Read was coming to the end of his second term as a Board Member, so will be leaving the Board at the end of July.</p> <p>CB thanked those Board members for all their work for the LEP during their time as Board members.</p>	
3.	<p>Policy</p>	
3.1	<p>Impacts of the General Election on Dorset</p> <p>VN ran through her presentation on the impact of the general election and the King's speech.</p> <p>AJ confirmed that the steer they have received so far is that this Government wants to move away from individual deals. It will be on a qualifying basis, so if you are already xy and z you will qualify for this. She said they are still waiting to get clarification. The local authorities have received a letter from Angela Raynor which talks about devolution. This is a big priority.</p> <p>VN confirmed that the letter from Angela Raynor informs that devolution will not be done on a small individual local authority basis but, for example, on a county level.</p> <p>NN said hopefully the new skills policy will get up and running quickly. Reflecting local need has been an obvious benefit of the Local Skills Improvement Plan, so we need to hold on to that.</p> <p>IG informed that he has had good engagement with the new Dorset MPs already. MP engagement with the previous MPs was a real struggle but the new MPs are engaging already. He said there has not been a big reaction to the King's speech from business and he thinks business is just ready for a change. The new employment rights bill is being treated with some caution and the changes to rights from day one of employment. He will be issuing advice and supporting businesses. Recruitment still a top issue for businesses.</p> <p>ME echoed that sentiment and noted the changes around zero hour contracts and employment rights. We have a big tourism industry that the county economy relies on. How this will affect this industry which is already struggling this year due to the weather. From a local government perspective, the King's Speech was positive but in regard to devolution, how we will go from nothing to having everything in place by end of September is a challenge. The fact that the Labour Government have said they are looking at improving the relationship, with multi-year settlements, is encouraging.</p>	

Item	Notes and Decisions	Action
3.1	<p>Impacts of the General Election on Dorset Cont'd</p> <p>ME went on to highlight the mention of compulsory purchase orders, which can be positive – such as the purchase of Holes Bay, the largest brown field site in the South West. The problem is that acquiring a site is only part of the solution, further funds are needed to develop that brown field site. With the support of Government, BCP will be able to bring development forward at more of a pace. Information regarding planning and infrastructure are awaited.</p> <p>AD said that the multi-year settlement is very welcome but there is no indication as to whether they will be getting any more money or whether the cap on council tax will be removed. If that was removed there is an opportunity for local authorities to raise more money though that.</p> <p>RB informed that he was part of a discussion on raising council tax and they acknowledged that it would be hugely unpopular with tax payers, who are already heavily burdened. He thought it would be a very difficult thing to do. He was concerned that they don't rush into anything re. devolution. They would want to do something with BCP Council. He mentioned elected mayors and if you have not got an elected mayor, you will miss out.</p> <p>AJ reassured there are a lot of devolution discussions that still need to be sorted out from the last Government and the priority is to get those sorted. The new Bill will need to be worked up and put through Government. It's a good idea to start having conversations about the devolved powers our Councils may want, to get on the front foot, but there's no need to get it all done by September. We will get more information that will help these conversations. There is an emphasis on mayors from this Government, as with the last, but what does this look like for more rural area where people have just not wanted mayors? Will there be incentives for places to put mayors in place. All of these things still need to be worked out at a policy level.</p> <p>SC commented that it has always been clear over the last few years about devolution and he did not know what has taken so long. He said he was keeping an eye on what will happen with adult social care fair pay.</p> <p>VN said that the two LAs have been sitting around the table together for quite a long time. They have an evidence base for a functional economic area. There is a case for a unit on a county basis in terms of planning and the things you need to do together. They already have a lot of plans and strategies in place that they are doing together. There are other examples around the country to look at and she pointed the Board to York and Yorkshire which is very similar to what Dorset has. The point is to decide what is wanted for the area and what is the best for the area.</p> <p>CB added there is an opportunity to work together on a county deal and work on what we already have here.</p> <p>Action: CB asked the Board if anyone thinks of anything we should be doing together relevant to the changed policy landscape to let VN know and let's make sure we do it.</p>	All

Item	Notes and Decisions	Action
3.2	<p>LEP Integration Task and Finish Group Update</p> <p>CB updated that the paper sets out options 1 and 2 and these were reported back to the Task and Finish Group at the meeting on 11 July. She recognised that devolution will have an impact on how we take these options forward</p> <p>NW ran through the paper and work that was done on looking at options 1 and 2 in the first instance and to look at what an option 3 might be in regard to the work around devolution. If the local authorities are going to deliver on anything else, some of the funding would have to be transferred to them to enable them to deliver the other contracts. With the Growth Hub, if they didn't get that funding they would have to look at either ceasing that activity or if it could be absorbed into other functions. If LEP staff are to be made redundant, the funding for that would need to be ring fenced and protected. There are two legacy contracts, the CEC contract which the LEP have direct with them for the Careers Hub service. The local authorities are looking to have conversations with the CEC about the novation of that contract to another deliverer. The Boscombe Skills Hub contract is a BCP contract with the LEP directly and BCP would be required to agree the future delivery of that with a third party or another option.</p> <p>Option 2 would be the same with the exception of those contracts. The CIC would need to continue to deliver the CEC and Boscombe Skills Hub contracts and funding would need to continue to do that. Council teams considered that option 2 would be their least favourable option. There is still some work to do on those legacy contracts.</p> <p>VN stated that from her perspective, form follows function. What are you trying to do comes first and then how you make it work follows from that. The interesting part of the role she took on was taking it from something that was in its last phase, anticipating a change of government and policy, getting it to the next place and what is good for the area. What is the best place to get us to? There is still the question of devolution and functions integrated into local democratic functions. With a focus on economic growth, option 3 – developing a jointly owned "Invest in Dorset" function, it is not something we have yet looked at. What are we trying to do and then what happens next should come from that.</p> <p>CB thanked the officer team for the work that has taken place. She informed that we are not the only LEP still standing. Many LEPs are still operating and being funded through to 2026. They have changed their name and are continuing to operate. We decided not to change our name. What is the vehicle that we need to ensure business engagement in local decision making and to deliver business support - whatever devolution is for the area?</p> <p>RB said he would like to see a clear project plan and what are the key activities that need to take place and decisions made at the various Board meetings to wrap this up in 7 months.</p> <p>CB said now the election has taken place and we have a new government, we need to flesh out devolution and working with the teams to be able to say this is what we are planning to deliver and how we are going to do this.</p>	

Item	Notes and Decisions	Action
3.2	<p>LEP Integration Task and Finish Group Update Cont'd</p> <p>VN informed that we have to set this out by October and make a decision about her team, as if we are making people redundant the consultation period needs to start on 21 October.</p> <p>AD wanted to be absolutely clear, the September meeting is the decision point. At that meeting we need to decide on the future. He remarked that all the time we are spending on this we are not talking about devolution.</p> <p>CB remarked that the work has got to be done in the context of devolution and yes, September is the deadline.</p> <p>VN said that the Task and Finish Group will bring a recommendation to the September Board meeting for discussion and decision.</p> <p>ME commented that the Task and Finish Group is made up of local authority members and officers and is there anything that the business Board Members would like to say at this point in regards feedback or any thoughts. If so, please send back to Task and Finish Group.</p> <p>Action: VN to set up a separate meeting with the business Board Members to brief them on the work of the Task and Finish Group.</p>	VN
3.3	<p>Pan-Dorset Growth Strategy</p> <p>VN explained this work is being done on behalf of the local authorities as part of the core funding received. It can be used to help put together a strategic plan and opportunities for the area, especially given the new Governments talk of an industrial strategy informed by local strategies.</p> <p>AJ said that they do not have any detail on the industrial strategy yet. They do not know what geographies the local industrial strategies will cover but any evidence gathering for this strategy will be helpful to inform your local industrial strategy.</p> <p>VN informed that she has received some feedback but not a lot of feedback from the Board. It is the intention to get a wider stakeholder involvement. The plan is to talk about it at the Dorset Ambassadors meeting in September.</p> <p>CB informed that the feedback she has received from the NHS and the Police, who she sent it to, has been very interesting. She explained that the document is about providing the evidence of where we are now and that we are required, and have a deadline, to publish this document. It is to be the evidence that can be used when bidding for funding. She said it is very important to have the evidence to support things which other areas do and that's why they are successful.</p> <p>AJ left the meeting at 11.13 am.</p> <p>IG commented that there is so much going on at the moment and businesses have limited amounts of time. A consultation is important but thought the best way to do it would be to get people in a room.</p>	

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3.3	<p>Pan-Dorset Growth Strategy Cont'd</p> <p>VN said she would like to get council officers from different departments together, expanding input beyond the narrow focus of economic development, to look more broadly at factors that create the conditions for prosperity – such as transport, housing, health and infrastructure.</p> <p>SC remarked that the sector missing from this, is the voluntary and community support sector, who do a lot of work.</p> <p>CB agreed that there is a place for the work that they do to be reflected in the document and said that any ideas on how to do that would be helpful.</p>	
4.	CIC	
4.1	<p>Annual Report</p> <p>VN informed that we have published our Annual Report on our website if you would like to go and have a look at it. It is a good evidence base on all the work that we have done. https://www.dorsetlep.co.uk/annual-report</p>	
4.2	<p>One Health Conference Report</p> <p>CB updated the Board on the recent One Health conference. This brings us the potential opportunity for some significant investment. We have submitted an expression of interest that might bring in some funding over three years to work in this area. One Health is about the interconnectivity between human, plant and animal health and looking at responsible innovation. We have created a useful framework that will help us develop something that is unique for Dorset, working across the South West from Southampton to Bristol and down the peninsula</p> <p>We identified over 500 companies working in this space and have a work plan that is steering us and have up a business reference group. We also want to add to the work that we are doing a more in depth look at the Environment Act. If we can do this right we will attract a lot of business interest in the approach. It is beyond just the medical sciences. What we really need and what they are calling for, is an accelerator somewhere in Bournemouth.</p> <p>The Science Park in Southampton is full with businesses that started off in the accelerator. Once businesses have gone past that initial innovation and want to accelerate, we need to make sure there is somewhere for them to do this in Dorset. It brings together the universities that we have and the range of business that we have in human, plant, animal and environmental health.</p> <p>CB informed that the comments she received from attendees was that it was the most exciting conference they have been to. It has so much potential for the part of the country where we are. We have a chance to do something that is different and unique.</p> <p>VN informed that there is a short video on the conference on our website and also a link in the newsletter, so please do have a look.</p>	

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4.3	<p>Dorset LEP Skills Update</p> <p>AD left the meeting at 11.32 am.</p> <p>RD ran through her paper. It was mentioned that, as Directors of the company, the board are responsible for ensuring these programmes are delivering. RD informed that the Career’s Hub contract ending in August, which we operate in conjunction with both councils, has completed nearly all the KPIs on this.</p> <p>RD explained that Compas Completion is a process for the schools to go through to report back to Government on the work they have done on the careers’ agenda, work based work programmes and apprenticeships. The Dorset Careers Hub supports each of the Careers Leads in the schools on the delivery of those programmes. The team within the LEP and two staff within each local authority deliver for those aged 12 years and above. In 2023/24 we have also run a project in primary schools.</p> <p>We have also delivered the Teacher Encounters project which has taken 27 teachers out to different organisations. For example, AFC Bournemouth, where they looked at the whole business to understand each of the roles within that business and the apprenticeships and training available. We have bid again for next year and we have a list of teachers who want to be involved in this project. It is helping teachers to understand what jobs look like so they can better inform their students on the next steps.</p> <p>IG mentioned that he had tried doing this years ago through the Young Chamber Programme and although businesses were willing to bring teachers in for half day, they experienced problems with Schools letting them out.</p> <p>RD said that we had expected that to be a problem but this year we have not experienced that. We did offer some payment to cover supply teachers but the majority of schools did not take that up.</p> <p>RD went on to update on the Digital Skills Hub. We are very pleased with the performance there and have had great feedback from different clients. One client has been back many times to see different people, taken himself from a place of addiction and poor mental health, and he has now secured an engineering job in Poole. We are seeing these sorts of stories each week. One of the challenges in Boscombe is how we continue to support the population in Boscombe on their journeys to work this beyond the Towns Fund money. A wellness centre will be opening up later this summer, using NHS money. It is a partnership piece that is happening here and we are one of the spokes in that.</p> <p>CS stated that what comes next falls into that conversation on security of funding over a period of time. We need clarity of approach on what we want to do.</p> <p>PR joined the meeting at 11.41 am.</p> <p>RD mentioned we also have a contract with the Chamber on work experience.</p>	

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4.3	<p>Dorset LEP Skills Update Cont'd</p> <p>IG said he has always believed it is really important but the challenge he has had is paying for it. There is a need for this type of work, as so many young people are having to find their own work experience and if your parents don't have those connections students aren't able to have work experience.</p> <p>RD went on to talk about the Skills Board and at the recent meeting they discussed the LMI up to the end of March. The updated information is on line. The number of job vacancies has fallen slightly but for Dorset that didn't happen until this year. We have c7,000 jobs a month, lower unemployment than the rest of the UK and have lower inactivity levels. Around 50% of those that are inactive are either long or short term sick.</p> <p>NN informed that the Skills Board works well and is an active group of service providers and we need to bear that in mind post March as where that sits and how that works.</p> <p>RD mentioned that because it is a Dorset wide board, it reflects our young people. Apprenticeship providers work right across the county and seeing the Dorset wide picture is really useful to help us resolve some of the skills gaps in the county.</p>	
4.4	<p>Dorset LEP Business Update</p> <p>RD introduced this paper and stated the main priority of this contract is delivery for business. The programmes that were particularly successful last year we have carried into this year. She informed that various businesses have secured more Innovate UK money and more opportunities coming for businesses to see. She said the Maritime Launch Pad Round 2 has gone live and formal bids can be submitted from 4 September to end October. We have been working with marine and maritime organisations to help them to bid into this. We are really driving this forward.</p> <p>We have a couple of tenders currently out for a Digital Productivity Programme and Supply Chain Development. We hope to get them out by late summer ending February 2025.</p>	
5.	For Noting	
5.1	<p>Great South West</p> <p>CB thanked the Chamber and BU for their support in arranging the Great South West event and to IG for hosting.</p> <p>IG said about 70 businesses attended and he was really pleased with how it went.</p> <p>CB informed that the Great South West Board meeting took place on Monday and they are also doing an evidence base piece of work for the place. We are feeding into that. She reiterated that we have need this evidence to apply for any funding and bids into Government.</p>	

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5.1	<p>Great South West Cont'd</p> <p>She informed that the election has changed the political map for the South West and this will affect the make-up of the APPG, changing from 31 Conservative and 2 Labour MPs to 7 Conservatives, 11 Labour and 15 Liberal Democrats.</p> <p>There are several Programme Boards looking at Defence, Energy, Food Security and Internationalisation. There is an opportunity to work together on scale and get some interest on our place and compete with the northern regions.</p> <p>SC asked that the volunteer sector not be forgotten.</p> <p>IG left the meeting at 12.00 pm.</p> <p>PR updated that a big early ask from the National Housing Confederation is that Government brings forward the announcement on new money for housing. All roads lead to housing, for instance, reflecting on the conversations around skills. He said he recently read a report that stated the cost of poor housing to NHS was around £1.4 bn and it has an effect on economic growth for an area. Dorset has a unique position with our offsite manufacturing capability and we are known nationally for it. Selina White recently presented at UK REIF on behalf of the Great South West, on Dorset and housing. We must continue to make the case for how important housing is for health and economic growth.</p> <p>CB mentioned the round table work being led by Matt Prosser on behalf of Dorset County, with representatives from health, policing, local authorities, voluntary organisations, businesses and others. The group is working to identify housing need and priorities, opportunities for using publicly owned land, opportunities for “unblocking” developments that have achieved planning permission, using modern materials and working to new environmental standards. Funding will be needed to take some of this forward.</p> <p>NN stated the word accommodation should be used rather than housing. It is homes that are needed, not necessarily houses.</p> <p>PR said the key point that came from the Homes and Economy Conference, is that economic growth is predicated on the availability of affordable homes for workers. Our current model is not working so we have to do something different and Dorset is well placed as an exemplar for that. We need a new model and new funding streams.</p>	
6.	Minutes from the Last Meeting	
	The Minutes were agreed as an accurate reflection of the last meeting. There were no matters arising.	
7.	Any Other Business	
	There was no other business raised.	