

DRAFT MINUTES

DORSET LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP BOARD

3 JUNE 2024 AT 10.00 AM TO 12.30 PM

VIRTUAL MEETING

MINUTES

Board Attendees:

Aaron Lawes (AL)
Cecilia Buffon (CB) (Chair)
Jim Andrews (JA)
Cllr Millie Earl (ME)
Nicola Newman (NN)
Paul Gough (PG)
Phil Sayles (PS)
Cllr Richard Biggs (RB)
Cllr Simon Clifford (SC)
Cllr Vikki Slade (VS)

Also Present:

Aidan Dunn (AD) (Dorset Council)
Chris Shepherd (CSH) (BCP Council)
Glynn Barton (GB) (BCP Council)
Jan Britton (JB) (Dorset Council)
Kathryn Hill (KH) (Dorset LEP)
Rebecca Davies (RD) (Dorset LEP)
Vinita Nawathe (VN) (Dorset LEP)

Apologies:

Ian Girling (IG)
Luke Rake (LR)
Neil Skelland (NS)
Nick Gaines (NG)
Paul Read (PR)

Item	Notes and Decisions	Action
1.	<p>Apologies were received for: Ian Girling, Luke Rake, Neil Skelland, Nick Gaines and Paul Read.</p> <p>Declarations of Interest: no declarations of interest were declared.</p>	
2.	For Discussion	
2.1	<p>Integration Group Update and Next Steps</p> <p>CB reminded the Board that the core functions are being delivered by the LEP during this financial year with the expectation that those functions would be integrated into the local authority structures by 31 March 2025. She informed the board that she and VN had met with Richard Biggs and Simon Clifford to bring them up to speed before this meeting. CB noted that we have a clear understanding of what needs to be transferred, we need to work out what the future model is and what they are going to be transferred to.</p> <p>VS spoke about the four options in the paper and noted that the 4th option is ruled out, as a devolution deal is ruled out at the moment. She said that there is no desire at the Councils for Dorset LEP CIC to carry on, unless Board Members can show there is a reason for it to carry on. She asked Board Members to give their views on the need for a Local Enterprise Partnership.</p> <p>JA said that the LEP has been really good at bringing the collective voice together, particularly around areas like skills and skills development. He asked where that pan Dorset conversation would be in future. It would be really useful to hear what that thinking looks like. He noted that the University was not bound by council areas and worked more widely than the council it was in.</p> <p>NN mentioned that with the LSIP, it is helpful to have a pan Dorset remit, its helpful to understand what is happening across both councils. It will be a loss not to have a pan Dorset view, as it is not just about two councils.</p> <p>CB said, from the conversations she has seen, the work of the integration task and finish group has been done on operational aspects of LEP functions, but a strategic steer was missing.</p> <p>CSh updated that officers have considered a list of the different functions of the LEP and started looking at what the options are with those, eg continuation, transferring or ceasing activity dependent on funding. That piece of work has been done, in a rough and ready fashion. Government guidance has been clear on what it is expecting. How that happens, whether continuation of the CIC or something new, is the discussion that needs to happen.</p> <p>CB said that we do need to have a vehicle for delivery and the challenge is what is that vehicle going to be.</p> <p>NN asked what is the risk to not having that in place and the risk of losing funding. To just have two council areas doesn't feel enough, to have everything delivered through two individual councils who are not working together.</p> <p>AL explained that he was a partner in a local accountancy firm and had joined the board in order to understand and help influence things of interest to</p>	

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2.1	<p>Integration Group Update and Next Steps Cont'd</p> <p>for the businesses he dealt with – like skills requirements or opportunities for investment.</p> <p>PS explained that he is part of the Integration Group and attended all but one meeting. It has felt a little slow at times but everything is laid out in this paper. Some functions that the CIC are doing, like the Dorset Careers Hub, need to continue. We need to know whether the councils want to take on these cross Dorset functions. If there is not the possibility or no appetite of that, then a continuation of some sort of body to do that needs to happen.</p> <p>RB said the challenge would be whether we need a business Board, and what the benefits of it are. We could keep a shadow board but are there alternates. There could be a need for a clean break but he did take on board the risk that if we don't have a vehicle we could miss out.</p> <p>AD clarified that any future funding from Government will be channelled through the local authorities and not through the CIC.</p> <p>CB explained that the LEP is a body corporate and the CIC brings together business and the local authority on the board. We have been talking about what the local authority wants to do but it is not in the local authority power to just wind the LEP CIC up. That is a CIC board decision.</p> <p>ME said from the working group perspective, the group were just looking at those functions moving into the local authorities. She said it feels awkward being part of this conversation, as it is up to the Board whether the CIC continue.</p> <p>There was discussion about the options presented in the paper. It was agreed that the Task and Finish Group will work up the practical details of the first two options, possibly looking at the third and bring that to the July Board meeting.</p> <p>The CEC contract was discussed and VN informed that we have to sign the contract up to end August 2025 this week. We have the funding available to continue it. We can sign the contract and, if necessary, give four months' notice and find someone else to continue with the contract. We can novate it to somewhere who can afford to do it. The ask of the board was to agree to take on the contract and to ringfence the liability and match funds necessary for the length of the contract in order that adequate resource was attached to ensure the contract could be delivered to August 2025 by the LEP CIC or another body if necessary.</p> <p>JA confirmed that BU is happy to continue employing the staff but could not agree to take on responsibility for the contract at this point.</p> <p>RD informed that there are also four staff within the councils that are paid for out of this CEC contract, not just the staff in the LEP. If we cancel the contract those staff would also be put at risk.</p>	

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2.1	<p>Integration Group Update and Next Steps Cont'd</p> <p>Action: The Board agreed that the CEC contract should continue and should be signed this week for the next academic year with appropriate funds ring fenced to ensure deliverability to August 2025.</p> <p>Action: Options 1 and 2 will be worked up and brought to the July Board meeting.</p> <p>VS and ME left the meeting at 10.49 am.</p> <p>In response to a question from JB, VN clarified that the partnership is not separate from the CIC. The Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership Board is the Board of Directors of the CIC.</p> <p>JB wanted to clarify whether winding up the partnership was the same as winding up the company, as there are decisions that might be made regarding a partnership that are different to decisions that need to be made as a Director and in the best interest of the company.</p> <p>PS said that how he sees it as LEP board member, the functions and purpose of what we are here to do are done in the best way possible. We need to consider what we are trying to deliver and what is the best way to do it.</p> <p>NN left the meeting at 11.00 am</p>	<p>All</p> <p>T&F Group</p>
2.2	<p>Outturn 2023/24</p> <p>VN stated when she joined the LEP, a three year plan was in place that had anticipated no further funding from government and would run down reserves over time. However, ongoing funding and higher than expected interest rates have left the reserves mostly intact. Whilst we are deciding what our future is post March there are still contracts to be delivered and funding streams to account for. If people did want to go with option 3 there is enough money in the reserves to continue to do that for some time.</p> <p>AD explained that the LEP has an Audit Committee which goes through the budget in detail. There is no requirement for an external audit but SWAT do an oversight. There is a proportionate level of oversight for the spend. We have to complete Government returns on what we have done with the money and how we have spent it.</p> <p>Action: The Board approved the Budget.</p>	
2.3	<p>Budget and Delivery Plan 2024/25</p> <p>VN explained to the Board that they are the partnership that owns this plan. She noted an increase in the budget for membership/partnership noting contribution requests to the Great South West including requests to help secure the Pavilion for REIF for next year and associated costs. She said the Directors around the table can be more directive if they want to be.</p> <p>Action: The Board approved the Delivery Plan.</p>	<p>All</p>

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3.	For Discussion	
3.1	<p>Update on Strategic Economic Priorities</p> <p>VN started by highlighting if there is a change of Government, the indication is that they will be looking at industrial strategies underpinned by local growth plans. She explained that the document outlines what the emerging, evidenced, economic priorities are. The Board needs to determine the strategic priorities and how to present it.</p> <p>CB stated that our first remit is to get the data and the economic insight.</p> <p>PS said he realises that Government has been somewhat confused and asked a number of bodies to do a number of things. In the FE sector, there are too many different plans for them to follow.</p> <p>JA said this is about our region. He noted that the way BU and many organisations work, they don't really care where the council boundaries are and work best where working pan Dorset. the University operates across both authorities and anything we can do to simplify that the better. Simplifying this for the audience we are working for is really key.</p> <p>VN said that this work is part of the core functions for this year and so we should just get on with it. She invited board members and officers to send in comments and said she felt it would be a useful starting document for what comes next.</p> <p>PG joined the meeting at 11.20 am.</p> <p>CB informed that the evidence data behind the report is available to everyone. She said how useful the data is and that it is used in skills work, used in the LSIP by creating aspects of need. It has been provided to the NHS for use in workforce planning. It is a useful document for people to be able to pick up and use the data. She explained that businesses don't know where county boundaries are either; they don't work to political boundaries, having a strategy that covers the whole of Dorset is very useful.</p> <p>PS stated he finds the data to be in-depth and useful.</p> <p>PG mentioned that he can populate the document with proof points. The Innovation Studio that came out of LEP and European funding, there is a lot of activity that can be used to populate the report with.</p> <p>JA asked if the document could be sent to the Board in a Word format, so he can circulate it round and get more feedback.</p> <p>Action: VN to send report to the Board.</p> <p>Action: Any feedback on the report please send to Vinita.</p> <p>AL left the meeting at 11.35 am</p>	<p>VN</p> <p>All</p>

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4	For Noting	
4.1	<p>Business Update</p> <p>RD spoke to the paper and highlighted some specific points.</p> <p>The Marine and Maritime launch pad round 2 will be open soon. We are working closely with a number of companies around Dorset and we are hopeful we will have more bids to put forward this time. RD informed that no Dorset businesses were successful in the last round which is why we have put on two events for businesses and offered bid writing support to help them be more successful for this next round.</p>	
4.2	<p>Skills update (verbal)</p> <p>RD updated that Dorset Skills Board meeting is taking place on Monday 10 June. They will look at the new LMI data that is available. They need to approve the Local Skills Improvement Plan report and as it is the end of a full year since the LSIP was originally published.</p> <p>RD informed the Board that Digital Skills Hub recently won an award for Best Local Partnership and yesterday celebrated the first cohort of the business accelerator.</p> <p>The Dorset Careers Hub has been working hard and February to Easter was packed full of events and careers fairs across the county. The first delivery of Teacher Encounters has taken place, where we take them out of the school and into a business or a training provider. We are over subscribed for this for this year.</p>	
4.4	<p>Board Member Updates (verbal)</p> <p>CB informed that NS wanted to raise that the next GSW Board meeting will be held at BattleLab on 15 July, with Defence being the focal deep dive topic for the Board. NS is seeking attendance from the MOD Director responsible for Levelling Up (although the election might mean civil servants are busy briefing new ministers for the weeks afterwards).</p> <p>PG informed that they have launched their air source heat pumps at the University as part of their Net Zero commitment. They have also started the first 10 apprenticeships in model making towards architecture as a degree apprenticeship.</p> <p>PS mentioned that degree apprenticeships are very important and he is working with HE partners on those. They have an upcoming event launching their strategy to 2030 to external audience and official opening of University Centre Poole. PS will send an invite out to the Board. With their major capital build funded by DfE, the footings are now in.</p> <p>PS said that it looks like Dorset has fallen through the gap regarding funding. The Institute of Technology has brought funding to other areas. The institutions and local authorities need to work together to bring in funding for the area.</p>	

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4.4	<p>Board Member Updates (verbal)</p> <p>RB informed that he attended UK REiff for the first time and that having the drone footage of Weymouth really brought people in for some good conversations. One observation he had though, with the Free Port down in Devon and nearby, questioned why you would come to Dorset. JB said he had had a lot of good conversations with people and they had received a good reception.</p>	
5.	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.	

Note: Date of Next Meeting - 18 July 2024 at 10.00 am to 12.30 pm – virtual meeting