

**DORSET LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP BOARD**

**23 JANUARY 2024 FROM 1.30 PM TO 4.00 PM**

**TEAMS MEETING**

**MINUTES**

**Board Attendees:**

Aaron Lawes (AL)  
Cecilia Buffon (CB) (Chair)  
Ian Girling (IG)  
Cllr Millie Earl (ME)  
Neil Skelland (NS)  
Nick Gaines (NG)  
Nicola Newman (NN)  
Paul Gough (PG)  
Paul Read (PR)  
Phil Sayles (PS)  
Cllr Simon Gibson (SG)  
Cllr Spencer Flower (SF)

**Also Present:**

Anwen Jones (AJ) (Cities and Local Growth Unit)  
Clare Fleming (Dorset LEP)  
Kathryn Hill (KH) (Dorset LEP)  
Nick Webster (NW) (Dorset Council)  
Rebecca Davies (RD) (Dorset LEP)  
Vinita Nawathe (VN) (Dorset LEP)

**Presenting:**

Ahmed Goga (Great South West)  
Emma Buckman (Buckman Associates)

**Apologies:**

Aidan Dunn (AD) (Dorset Council)  
Jim Andrews (JA)  
Luke Rake (LR)  
Cllr Vikki Slade (VS)

Item	Notes and Decisions	Action
1.	<p>Apologies were received for: Jim Andrews, Luke Rake, Vikki Slade and Aidan Dunn</p> <p>Declarations of Interest: no declarations of interest were declared.</p>	
2.	<p><b>Board Members' Updates</b></p> <p>PG informed that the Arts University Bournemouth has won a grant for £1.6m to connect activity in creative technology and plastics and environmental sustainability. They plan to create a new research centre in plastics that aims to be an R&amp;D centre for local businesses.</p> <p>PR informed that Weymouth College has been awarded funding for a Modern Methods of Construction Centre of Excellence. PR has been helping with the development of the course content and building up the courses. Homes England has expressed interest in spreading this further.</p> <p>PS informed that B&amp;P College received an outstanding from Ofsted for their Specialised Chef Apprentices residential accommodation which enables students to come and study in Bournemouth and get placement opportunities with high profile employers/chefs in London. Work is also underway at the Bournemouth campus in preparing for a new building and redevelopment of Bournemouth campus.</p> <p>IG updated on the latest economic forecast and quarterly economic forecast findings. It is still a challenging climate at a national level but businesses are optimistic, although recruitment continues to be a problem for businesses in Dorset.</p> <p>NN updated on the continued collaboration since publishing the Local Skills Improvement Plan. She mentioned the upcoming Dorset Skills Day taking place on 22 February and asked the Board if they could cascade this to their networks.</p>	All
3.	<p><b>Policy</b></p>	
3.1	<p><b>Latest Guidance from Government re Integration of LEPs</b></p> <p>VN took the paper as read, reminding the Board that this is about the transfer of core functions to the local authorities and that it was agreed these functions would continue to be delivered by the LEP until March 2025, whilst the Task and Finish Group work up options for the longer-term sustainable delivery of these functions. Core function delivery for the next year (April 2024 – March 2025), includes the development and publication of an up to date economic strategy for the area by October 2024, for which we had a good head start.</p> <p>AJ said that the paper included all the currently published detail. AJ confirmed that the Integration plan has been received and although there has not been a formal response to the Board, there are no concerns with that plan and she encouraged everyone to progress with that plan moving forward.</p>	

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<b>3.</b>	<b>Policy</b>	
3.2	<p><b>Task and Finish Group</b></p> <p>CB informed that the members of the Task and Finish Group are Cllr Simon Gibson, Cllr Millie Earl, Aidan Dunn, Phil Sayles and herself. They will be supported by Nick Webster, Adrian Trevett and Vinita Nawathe. The first meeting is scheduled for 2 February and that meeting will be looking through the guidance and scoping out the questions to be worked on. She said that the LEP has communicated that we will be doing business as usual for the next year whilst we work through this. Round table discussions with businesses across the county are planned, to inform how we will deliver these functions after March 2025. The LEP Board wants to take this as an opportunity to refresh how we work together with partners across the area.</p> <p>CB confirmed that the Dorset Council remains the accountable body for the next year and explained that Aidan Dunn is part of the group as the section 151 officer.</p>	
3.3	<p><b>Economic Evidence Base and Priorities Refresh - Emerging Themes and Next Steps</b></p> <p>Emma Buckman (EB) went through the paper, explaining that it is not a finished piece of work. EB is reviewing all the evidence and is having conversations with most members of the Board to get a sense of the opportunities and issues affecting the area.</p> <p>EB said that the energy and environmental information had come from reports the LEP had already commissioned and also Government departments. There are a few gaps where we could use more information, such as in relation to employment land where it is unclear as to whether there is enough or more is needed. Everything in the report is referenced.</p> <p>It was noted that it would be helpful if, in the report, there could be clarity on whether references to 'Dorset' meant Dorset LEP area or Dorset Council. SF suggested the term "Pan-Dorset", to mean the entire county.</p> <p>EB clarified that the housing needs information has come from the Housing Needs Assessment. It looks at population demands and applies a formula to that.</p> <p>NS mentioned that the growth and productivity information is up to 2021 and asked if there are any sources of information that are more recent. EB explained that is the most recent Office of National Statistics data. She explained that location quotients compare the percentage of employment in a sector locally and nationally. If location quotients are above 1 then we have more businesses than the national average, in that sector.</p> <p>A discussion took place on transport and that this is a major issue for the county, affecting how people can access work and education. IG informed that there are real problems with transport and parking across the BCP area and getting to work in the rural area is often a lot easier than travelling in the conurbation. IG considered parking to be a barrier to growth for businesses in the conurbation.</p> <p>PS spoke to the skills supply section and the flow of young people through the institutions into the workplace. There is a higher level of students studying A-level</p>	

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3.3	<p><b>Economic Evidence Base and Priorities Refresh - Emerging Themes and Next Steps Cont'd</b></p> <p>and not going into technical courses. More people are doing A-levels but fewer people are going on to university. He asked about the data sources used in the report and EB explained that all the data comes from the Department for Education and is the most recent data that they have published.</p> <p>EB said that from the conversations she has had with the Board and her assessment of the evidence base, she has defined a set of potential priorities as a starting point. Barriers identified include pockets of deprivation in the area, a shortage of people to fill job vacancies and homes for people to live in.</p> <p>CB stated it is important to identify what you are not going to do as well as what you are going to do.</p> <p>The micro business environment was discussed, as the majority of businesses pan-Dorset are small or micro. Productivity in such businesses can be challenging to measure and staffing needs are different to larger companies, as they need multi skilled people, rather than specialists.</p> <p>Our main challenge will be making it appealing and attractive for people to live in our county, with the major barrier being the cost of housing. Affordable homes in the right place, with reliable infrastructure (heating, transport, digital, schools etc) are key.</p> <p>VN reminded the Board of the Homes and the Economy Conference taking place on 27 February. If your home is taking up all of your income/savings, you are not going to use it to start up a new business. Housing costs are part of the whole productivity chain.</p> <p>EB explained that to date, her work has been to update the economic evidence base and strategic economic priorities. Consultation has been mainly with LEP board members and LA officers. In the latest guidance from government, this should be taken further to the development of an economic strategy looking forward ten years. EB presented a timeline and plan to do this by including local forecasting that goes over the next 10 years and aligning with other plans and strategies currently under development, for example in transport and planning. There is a lot of activity underway in the development of local transport plans and strategic transport plans for the region. Input from Board members will be required, to get to a draft vision and objectives that can be taken out to wide consultation with stakeholder groups. The aim is to develop a final draft strategy document by end of August.</p> <p>VN informed that the instruction from Government for the economic plan is that it is has to be owned by the local authorities. The board agreed the process and timelines for completing the draft strategy in time to hand over to the councils to take Through their processes.</p> <p>NN said she thought the report would be something that the Skills Board would be interested in looking at this more closely.</p>	All agreed

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3.4	<p><b>Great South West</b></p> <p>Ahmed Goga (AG) updated the Board on the Great South West (GSW) work. The GSW Board has representatives from across political, business and education. He said Dorset has strong representation on the Board. It is worth reiterating that GSW is not a LEP or a super LEP. There has been some misunderstanding and confusion about this. He said he wanted to focus on what the GSW is doing going forward. It works to convene - convene the critical assets and partners of the region; to clarity - champion the assumption that people know what is here is a false assumption; creating - new ideas for the region, need to make sure that as part of our position on the national stage that we are clear on those; communicating - having clearly defined priorities and communicating on them; culture – set the tone and rhythm on how we are seen.</p> <p>He said that the Partnership and Board has met and reset its focus towards delivering the UK's future energy, defence and food security. These are of national importance and are of scale Extensive work will be taking place over the next couple of weeks that will launch this. Future meetings will move around the area. Need to look at how to bring greater engagement and visibility, so developing a programme of regional roadshows around the area. GSW will also be hosting four events in Westminster across the year and an annual conference which is taking place at Sandy Park in Exeter. GSW is commissioning an Independent Economic Review that will provide the framework and route map for economic growth for the region. There are many more things going on and looking to do much more regular sessions with partners going forward.</p> <p>CB asked whether the Westminster events will be themed and how will people get to know about them. We need to engage with our local MPs to get them to those events.</p> <p>AG said they will be themed and they are working with the GSW APPG and working on mobilising the Dorset MPs through engagement with the APPG. The Dorset contingent has been more difficult to engage with the GSW APPG. He said he is working with SG on what can be done to work on that.</p>	
<b>4.</b>	<b>CIC</b>	
4.1	<p><b>One Health Enterprise Network Update</b></p> <p>CB gave an update on the recent One Health Enterprise Network Steering Group meeting. She explained that the OneHealth network is a cluster of businesses, universities and others working across animal, human, plant and environmental health. the Steering Group meeting comprised three universities and businesses, together with the one Health leads of DBT and Defra. This is the next stage of development that has grown from work initially done with the Wessex Academic Health Science Network. We have run four conferences in this space and at the last one in July we agreed to set up a Steering Group to take the work forward. We have identified over 500 companies working in this space and we are trying to create something that does not exist anywhere else.</p>	

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4.1	<p><b>One Health Enterprise Network Update Cont'd</b></p> <p>CB said that all three universities felt they could lead on a “hackathon-type” working session. They saw the potential for creating research and innovation and the opportunity to network with people from different areas. It is an exciting opportunity if we can develop the cluster across Dorset and the South West.</p> <p>VN informed that an EPSRC funding opportunity is available for new clusters. The Steering Group confirmed that they are keen to pursue this and as it has to be led by an HE organisation, BU has agreed to lead supported by Southampton, with the LEP supporting the application process. This is an international concept but we are keeping our involvement to a manageable scale at the moment. There are a lot of academics talking about it across the world. Our conferences have demonstrated the value of getting businesses together to see where they can collaborative across what might otherwise be considered, different sectors.</p> <p>CB stated that Innovate UK are very supportive of the initiative.</p> <p>NS mentioned the National Digital Twin Programme and that would be a worthwhile connection as there is a good national programme going on. Some regions are using it for crisis planning for instance.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> NS to send a link to CB and VN.</p>	NS
4.2	<p><b>Business Update</b></p> <p>RD ran through some highlights and mentioned there are two innovation programmes at the moment that businesses can be part of. She informed that all the programmes for this year and now running and we are hoping to hit the high intensity target on our KPIs.</p> <p>There is another Dorset Ambassador event taking place on 27 March and AUB are hosting.</p> <p>RD mentioned the Innovation UK and Maritime launch pad and that 52 applications have been received across the whole of the GSW. We do not know how many are from Dorset businesses. The applications are being reviewed ready for the second stage and hopefully there will be some Dorset applications.</p> <p>RD said that Board Members amplifying our comms is very much appreciated and is the best way of reaching new business.</p> <p><b>AW and AL left the meeting at 3.15 pm</b></p>	
4.3	<p><b>Skills Update</b></p> <p>RD informed that she had spoken at the Integrated Care Partnership meeting this morning. It was interesting for ICP members to see what the labour market looks like outside the world of health and care.</p> <p>The Digital Skills Hub have launched “connected Mondays”, which is focussed on events for business. In the morning there will be a series of workshops and</p>	

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4.3	<p><b>Skills Update Cont'd</b></p> <p>master classes and the afternoons are for drop ins. The skills delivery has increased significantly for this term and we now have eight sessions a week.</p> <p>RD informed that the Dorset Careers Hub is in the top 10 of Careers Hubs in the country against performance markers and we are used as an example for our delivery. This is great news for the team. RD updated that there have been changes within the team, with Rebecca Phillips leaving us.</p> <p>IG updated that Dorset Chamber has a project working with the Careers Hub looking to increase the quality of work experience opportunities across the whole of the Dorset area. RD explained that we are working with the Chamber to get more businesses to offer work experience for young people, to show them what it is like to be working and what the workplace looks like. It is such an important part for that move into work or higher education. IG explained that young people are being asked to find their own work placements and if their parents do not have those contacts, it can be very difficult for them. If they do not find a placement they have to remain in school.</p> <p>NN mentioned she was at the Battlelab this morning for an event and they had a great session with Atlas Elektronik explaining what they do with their work experience.</p> <p><b>SF left the meeting at 3.23 pm</b></p>	
<b>5.</b>	<b>For Noting</b>	
5.1	<p><b>FACR Committee</b></p> <p>NN took the paper as read but wanted to highlight that the Committee agreed that the Growing Places Fund should remain as an open call.</p> <p>NG said that we need to get more people engaged with the Growing Places Fund, asking Board Members to please make people aware. He pointed out that we are working very close to our planned budget and asked the people involved in the transition planning to be aware, so we can plan to get most out of our budget going forward.</p> <p>RD confirmed that we will be doing more comms for the Growing Places Fund and we will provide the Board with information to share across their contacts.</p>	
<b>6.</b>	<b>Minutes from the Last Meeting</b>	
	<p>The Minutes were agreed as an accurate reflection of the last meeting. There were no matters arising.</p>	
<b>7.</b>	<b>Any Other Business</b>	
	<p><b>Local Skills Improvement Plan</b></p> <p>NN updated that the Department of Education and Department of Media and Sport have shown interest in the Local Skills Improvement Plan and so she was feeling very supported, both locally and nationally.</p>	

Note: Date of Next Meeting – 28 March 2024 at 10.00 am to be held at the Digital Skills Hub, 30-32, Royal Arcade, Christchurch Rd, Boscombe, Bournemouth BH1 4BT