

DRAFT MINUTES

DORSET LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP BOARD

27 JANUARY 2025 FROM 1.30 PM TO 4.00 PM

HELD AT BOURNEMOUTH UNIVERSITY, POOLE HOUSE, FERN BARROW, POOLE BH12 5BB

MINUTES

Board Attendees:

Cecilia Buffon (CB) (Chair)
Cllr Millie Earl (ME)
Nick Gaines (NG)
Nicola Newman (NN)
Phil Sayles (PS)
Selina White (SW)
Cllr Simon Clifford (SC)

Also Present:

Chris Shepherd (CS) (BCP Council)
Joe Saffer (JS) (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government)
Kathryn Hill (KH) (Dorset LEP)
Nick Webster (NW) (Dorset Council)
Rebecca Davies (RD) (Dorset LEP)
Richard Ironside (RI) (Dorset Council)
Vinita Nawathe (VN) (Dorset LEP)

Apologies:

Aidan Dunn (AD) (Dorset Council)
Ian Girling (IG)
Keith Phalp (KP)
Lisa Mann (LM)
Neil Skelland (NS)
Cllr Richard Biggs (RB)

Presenting:

Sarah Hordern (SH) Perspicio

Item	Notes and Decisions	Action
1.	<p>Apologies were received for: Aidan Dunn, Ian Girling, Keith Phalp, Lisa Mann, Neil Skelland and Richard Biggs.</p> <p>Declarations of Interest: no declarations of interest were declared.</p>	
2.	<p>Chair Update</p> <p>CB updated that the Business Board Network, which used to be the LEP Network representing the LEPs and now represents the Business Boards across the country, has had a number of meetings with a range of Ministers, the most recent discussions being with Alex Norris MP, who is the Minister for Local Growth. He has confirmed that he wants to continue meetings with the Business Board leaders in some way and so he has instigated a consultation that will consider reversing the proposal to withdraw funding for the previous LEP functions of Business Board support and strategic Economic Growth Planning.</p> <p>The decision to consult is a direct response to a number of local authorities saying that they want to run a business board and do strategic economic planning, but do not have any funding for these activities. Consultation is now live and the link will be circulated with the Minutes.</p> <p>CB reflected that it was pleasing to see strong Ministerial support for Business Boards and the Business Board Network. She recommended that the new Business Board(s), once established, should seek to join the network – and the new Business Board Chair, or Chairs, for this area will also be expected to have a representative on the Integrated Care Partnership and the board of the Great Southwest.</p> <p>CB informed that the Great South West have a Westminster event on 18 March to promote the region's unique options and the prospectus for UKREiF in May. We are hoping that they will be able to take the Portland energy projects, the Innovation Park and the defence activity that we heard about in December and the Talbot Innovation Quarter.</p>	
3.	<p>Policy</p>	
3.1	<p>Transition of LEP Functions Update and Next Steps</p> <p>VN explained the paper has been prepared by NW, with input from herself and CS, and then handed over to NW to go through the paper. A discussion on took place.</p>	
3.2	<p>Pan-Dorset Framework for Growth</p> <p>VN thanked board members and council officers, from BCP Chief Exec down, who had contributed to the document. She reminded the Board that the draft framework document was presented to the Dorset Ambassadors Group, where 50 people attended, including three MPs and they took part in a workshop during the development stage. It was then on the LEP website with a call for input which resulted in a number of organisations and individuals providing feedback. The draft has also been referenced by the project promoters for the Dorset Clean Energy. It has a lot of buy in across the area and is perceived as a good starting point on which to develop detailed plans and from which to inform priorities on a larger devolution geography.</p>	

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3.2	<p>Pan-Dorset Framework for Growth Cont'd</p> <p>CB mentioned that the Police, the NHS, Wessex Health Partners and many businesses provided feedback, making it a good evidence base for the place. Two MPs are known to have requested copies for use in their plans for spending review asks.</p> <p>A discussion on the document and its purpose and audience took place.</p> <p>SC wanted to thank those who contributed to the work. He commented that he saw it as a tool to help Dorset Council in developing their own strategy and priorities. They recently had an away day to start to build their plans, so he found the information, the support, and the partnership working very helpful. As a Combined Authority, a much bigger strategy will be required and where Dorset Council sits in that is yet to be developed but he thought it is a really helpful piece of work and he wanted to thank all those who contributed.</p> <p>JS explained Government had asked areas to do economic strategies on the past LEP geography in areas without devolution pathways. Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) areas would have also done their strategies but the new administration is now asking Mayoral Strategic Authorities (MSA) to produce local growth plans and it will be a statutory duty for every MSA to produce those plans going forward. The exact position that Government will take with non MSA areas is not yet clear but obviously Government will take into account where areas look like they are going to form a new combined authority when it comes to producing economic plans that will then feed into the wider industrial strategy. Recognising that these things are going to take some time, it is useful to have the pan Dorset framework as interim information to support investable propositions. Investors in the place would want to see the wider geographical strategy evidence that this is a place that is worth investing in and then as Government does build those bigger plans this will feed in. JS indicated that his team have already fed a lot of the data from the pan Dorset growth framework, into the industrial strategy, so the information has already been utilised.</p> <p>Noting the need to proof read and design, and that comments had been received by absent board members that morning, VN invited one last opportunity for comments. She stated the LEP will finish the report as contracted, for the local authorities to decide what they do with it.</p> <p>RD explained that a legacy website is being created and there will be links to live and archive data. It will also signpost to services, such as the Dorset Careers Hub that will sit within Dorset Council. It was suggested the document would be published there.</p> <p>Action: Final version to be circulated ahead of publication on website.</p>	VN
3.3	<p>Support for Non Transferred Activity</p> <p>VN spoke to her paper and a discussion took place.</p> <p>Action: It was agreed to support the Dorset Skills Board, UKREiIF Collateral and Support, One Health and the Invest in Dorset website.</p> <p>Action: Dorset Ambassadors to be consulted on continuation.</p>	<p>All agreed</p> <p>VN</p>

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4.	CIC	
4.1	<p>Business Update</p> <p>RD gave an update from the paper.</p> <p>We have run a programme of events to help Dorset companies identify innovation and supply chain opportunities within Health & Social Care sector across the South West region and beyond. The defence and security sector supply chain events are almost done and we have had 100 interventions.</p> <p>Digital Technology and Productivity programme is in train right now.</p> <p>The Bid Writing Horizon Scanning Service and Bid Writing Support have all been busy this year. The Growth Groups continue and all are due to finish by the end of March.</p> <p>We are looking at a very busy reporting month of March and then the reporting for the Department for Business and Trade Growth Hub will be done by Shelley when she is in Dorset Council. This is currently Dorset Council's contract and we are the named delivery team, on this contract.</p> <p>Shelley has been looking at what comes next and has met with BCP Council and Dorset Council to look at how the DBT growth hub aligns to UKSPF delivery in the future. There is a vision that these pieces of funding are likely to come together but not until April 2026. There is clear need not to be duplicating between those two funds.</p> <p>RD mentioned that in relation to the Innovate UK Maritime grants, two Dorset businesses are currently undergoing due diligence but we are still unable to name the businesses.</p>	
4.2	<p>Skills Update</p> <p>RD updated on the current status on the two contracts. The Dorset Careers Hub, which will move across to Dorset Council, is in a great position in terms of the current performance tracking. This contract runs through till the end of August, so it will transfer mid contract. We are holding some great events at the moment. We did a parents and coffee event on Saturday in Poole High Street. We had 51 people arrive to learn about apprenticeships and take the opportunity to talk to careers advisors. It was great to hear that there were even some groups of teenagers that came without their parents. We have had really positive feedback on all the events that are happening and it is just the beginning of events season. We are doing well on the performance tracking and this contract already works in collaboration with the Enterprise Coordinators at BCP Council and Dorset Council.</p> <p>RD explained that we are in the process of ending the Primary School Project, which has been exceptionally positive. So positive that at the event in Westminster, one of our employers, Tilbury Douglas in Dorchester, will be representing and talking on a panel about this start small dream big, which is all about bringing employers into primary schools and helping those at the very start of their educational career. The Dorset Careers team are getting</p>	

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4.2	<p>Skills Update Cont'd</p> <p>showcased at that particular event, along with the report that has been shared today, which is all about the delivery of this project nationally and how Dorset has fared really well in that delivery. RD noted her gratitude to Claire Dunn, who has done an amazing job of getting schools on board and helping bring employers into school.</p> <p>We have also created a work Experience Directory, which will be a valuable tool for all careers leaders.</p> <p>Digital Skills Hub contract: we are still delivering strongly. It is pleasing to hear that the two people that are essential to running the hub, Kaddi and Oliver, are currently in talks with the Council about new contracts for that final year. We have kept all partners that we have been working with aware of what is happening.</p> <p>A massive event in Boscombe with the NHS, is planned for next week, promoting "thrive 25" which is all about work, employment, skills and well-being.</p> <p>The Dorset Skills Board met yesterday and NN informed that it was another very successful meeting, with good attendance from the universities, the colleges, the independent training providers, business and the councils. An update on the LSIP was given as this is the LSIP Steering Group. RD provided an update on the economic landscape and latest LMI data. The big discussion was about the "Connected to Work" fund which will provide funding, over an extended period of time that now sits with the local authorities, targeted at getting people back into work, particularly the economically inactive. to the Skills Board will meet again before the end of March, to tie up outstanding items and work on the Local Schools Improvement Plan phasing.</p> <p>NN went on to say to JS, that general feedback is that when Government departments appear indecisive about when they are going to provide further details of upcoming programmes. NN reminded that there are people on the ground who we would want to deliver programmes and they need to know whether there will be contracts to bid for.</p> <p>Many are on annualised contracts within organisations or small provider services, so the government approach of pushing announcements back by a couple of months, makes an enormous difference.</p>	
5.	For Noting	
5.1	<p>Talbot Innovation Quarter</p> <p>CB introduced Sarah Hordern (SH), CEO of Perspicio, a regeneration advisory company, working with the Talbot Village Trust. She explaining she works with long term land owners who are looking to realise their strategic objectives. SH gave a presentation on the plans for the Talbot Quarter. She began by explaining that the Trust was formed in the 1850s by two sisters who wanted to support people to help themselves. The trust is a charity and one of the largest grant giving charities in Southeast Dorset, very much focused on supporting</p>	

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5.1	<p>Talbot Innovation Quarter Cont'd</p> <p>people. The Trust is about living well and balancing social, environmental and economic outcomes with its long term vision benefit for community as a whole.</p> <p>Planning consent for the Talbot Quarter was obtained in July 2024. The ambition being that it very much drives and supports the universities. There is detailed consent for a new Nuffield Health Hospital. There is an opportunity to increase housing and create additional student accommodation and potentially graduate accommodation as well, linked to the innovation park. Potentially some single family housing as well. Also, a cultural and commercial hub, so providing Café facilities and local shop facilities. The BCP local plan promotes “sustainable neighbourhoods” and currently in this area there is nothing for the people who live in this area so the plan includes opportunities to create something that makes this neighbourhood a more attractive place to be. There are opportunities around health, education, a sustainable place, walking and cycling.</p> <p>For the LEP and the three universities the conversation is about what is the innovation? For BCP Council, what is the narrative. We need a story if we are going to attract investment. If we are going to get the place built, and if we are going to position it for Government funding, that narrative is very important.</p> <p>This is an opportunity for BCP. The Quarter could be effectively the sort of physical embodiment of all the innovative things that we know are going on here. We need a narrative and are inviting you as council, business and skills leaders, to help create that. The aim is to have messages and media that the BCP team can take to UKREiif as one of a number of the pan-Dorset opportunities within the wider context of the Great South West.</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.	

Note: Date of Next Meeting – 27 March at 10.00 am (face to face meeting)