

Economic and Skills Development Partnership

Wednesday, 26 September 2018

8.30 - 10.35 am

The Lexicon Management Suite, The Avenue Car
Park, Bracknell RG12 1AP



Present: Bob Collis, Transport Research Laboratory
Nancy Lalor, Learning to Work
Peter Smith, Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce
Stuart Jeffries, Bracknell Forest Council
Chris Mansfield, Bracknell Forest Council
Stuart Mathews, Edgbarrow School
James Taylor, Activate Learning
Gerald Hegarty, Bracknell Forest Council
Simon Fryer, Fryer Commercial
Colin Wilman, Federation of Small Business
Andy Meader, Pegasus

Apologies: Kashif Nawaz, Assistant Virtual School Head

Action Points

Minute	Item
127	<p>Action Points from Last Meeting</p> <p>The Partnership received the minutes of the last meeting, and noted the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anneken Priesack, Bob Collis and Andrew Hunter had arranged a meeting to refresh the membership of the Partnership. A Note to the Partnership would follow in due course. (Action: Anneken Priesack / Bob Collis / Andrew Hunter)• Nancy Lalor had agreed to take on the Chair of the Employment and Skills Subgroup, and the work programme for this group would be refreshed and agreed at the next meeting. The Partnership thanked Nancy for taking on this role. (Action: Nancy Lalor)• Bob Collis and Peter Smith agreed to meet to consider a joint meeting between the ESDP and Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce. (Action: Bob Collis / Peter Smith)• The Council's photography competition was ongoing until the end of October 2018 when judging would commence, and the ESDP was sponsoring the Young Photographer and Business photo categories. Members are to be reminded to let staff know that they have only a few weeks to send their photos in. (Action: Bob Collis)• Further attempts had been made to make contact with Vodafone in regard to the BID, but these had not been successful.
128	<p>The Lexicon: presentation by Harry Pickering, Investment Manager, Schrodgers</p> <p>Harry Pickering, Investment Manager from Schrodgers presented to the Partnership</p>

on the background, development and challenges for The Lexicon.

The vision for The Lexicon had been to create an appealing, family friendly retail environment.

Food and beverage covered 4% of the total square feet of The Lexicon; this was undersupplied and was being addressed. Harry commented that existing restaurants were overtrading and that plans for a new development at The Deck would ease this pressure, increasing overall total square feet for food and beverage to 8%.

There were significant concerns from retailers around lack of residential provision in and near the town centre.

Harry explained the 'figure of eight' shopping route which would be completed by the Deck opening the area between Princess Square and The Deck.

It was noted that although The Avenue had been designed to be the premium end of the shopping centre, most of the intended retailers had set up concessions in Fenwicks instead of retail units.

In terms of footfall, The Lexicon had recorded 16.5m on its first birthday, compared to another recently opened shopping centre nearby which had 15m footfall. The dwell time in The Lexicon was too low, and ways to increase dwell time were being investigated. Recent data had indicated that shoppers were travelling from nearby affluent areas to shop at The Lexicon rather than local alternatives.

Since the Lexicon had opened, Bracknell had gone from 255th to 33rd most popular shopping destination in the UK. Bracknell was now perceived as a convenience centre to shop in, compared to larger town centres such as Reading.

It was noted that the Council had frozen car parking charges for the coming year.

The Lexicon had been 80% let on opening day, and would soon be at 92% let. Sales had been very high.

In terms of areas of improvement, there had been a later opening than expected and the town centre build had been over budget. There had been more turnover on leases than expected, and extensive snagging works undertaken.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- The Panel queried how The Lexicon would remain unique. It was noted that more independent traders were sought, and The Lexicon management staff were conscious of this and addressing the matter.
- The Deck would serve to address the 3.5m difference in street level between Princess Square and the High Street. The Deck would include an event space for seasonal events, such as ice rinks, Crufts and fashion shows. The area would host tapas and wine bars to support the night time economy, and would be include an activity space in the area beneath. The Deck was unlikely to be built until 2020.
- Harry commented on the training need for retailers, and suggested that an in house training facility may be beneficial to retailers.
- Nancy Lalor invited Harry Pickering to speak at a Learning to Work recruitment event to promote vacancies at The Lexicon.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was noted that young people in the area felt that they would be paid more for local cleaning work than retail. • Despite there being several coffee shops in the town centre, it was not felt that these impacted on the sales of one another. <p>The ESDP thanked Harry for an informative and useful presentation.</p>
129	<p>Proposed ESDP Autumn Event</p> <p>The last ESDP breakfast seminar had discussed High Performing Workplaces of the future and had been a success. The next event was planned to be held at Lightbox in the Southern Business District on 21 or 23 November 2018 on the subject of Making the Move. Panasonic would be speaking on their move and staff engagement around this. UK Property Forums were working with the ESDP to bring agents and businesses together for this event.</p>
130	<p>Sub-group Updates</p> <p>Bob Collis updated the Partnership on the work of the Infrastructure subgroup.</p> <p>The subgroup had supported the Local Authority on a number of funding bids, and supported the lobbying against changes to the Reading to Waterloo timetable for Martins Heron. Whilst initially a successful intervention, the rail changes had since been delayed until May 2019.</p> <p>It was proposed that the subgroup could begin to lobby business on matters not already addressed by the Local Authority. A new ESDP specific workstream was proposed, as several items on the existing workstream were duplicated from the Local Authority transport plan. An example of an action for the ESDP was lobbying government to support electric charging points for improving infrastructure.</p> <p>Bob Collis had met with Gary Cranford, Economic Development Officer at Wokingham Borough Council to discuss the establishment of an ESDP type organisation in Wokingham. The Partnership welcomed the opportunity to network across the two boroughs.</p> <p>Bob informed the Partnership that the LEP were renewing their Berkshire Local Industrial Strategy (BLIS) and the ESDP had been invited to attend a workshop to engage in consultation for this strategy. The date for this workshop would be advised at a later date.</p>
131	<p>BID Update</p> <p>Bob Collis gave a BID update.</p> <p>Stakeholders in the BID continued to meet at Fujitsu, who supported the BID project. Partners for Better Business were the technical supporters to the BID.</p> <p>It was noted that there had been a disappointing delay to getting the BID established, and it was hoped that a ballot would be conducted within a year of all</p>

	<p>businesses within the southern and western business districts.</p> <p>It was clarified that businesses under a rateable value, such as £12k, would not have to financially contribute to the BID, and a cut-off at the top end of rateable value might also be set.</p> <p>A recent survey of businesses in Bracknell had shown that 61% of businesses in the BID areas anticipated a growth, 33% felt that their business location had improved. The top issues raised by businesses were road infrastructure and congestion, and the perception of disinterest from the Local Authority. 58% of businesses said they would vote for the BID and 35% of businesses said they 'did not know' if they would support the BID at ballot.</p> <p>The Partnership raised concerns that the BID area did not have an established boundary, and that it may be difficult to manage across two different business areas, with different characteristics and needs. Bob replied that the Steering Group was aware of potential issues over boundaries and would be working to ensure that, whilst strategic issues would apply to both the Southern and Western areas, businesses in each area would see their local issues addressed accordingly.</p>
132	<p>Dates of Future Meetings</p> <p>20 November 2018, 8:30am 22 January 2019, 8:30am</p>