

Economic and Skills Development Partnership

Tuesday, 16 April 2019

9.00am – 11.00am

**Waitrose Conference Centre, Willoughby Road,
Bracknell, RG12 8FD**



Present: Bob Collis, Transport Research Laboratory
Nancy Lalor, Learning to Work
Councillor Bob Wade, Business Champion
Karen Hampton, Frimley Healthcare Foundation Trust
Pam Sharman, Regus
David Burrows, ON Semiconductor
Simon Fryer, Fryer Commercial
Peter Smith, Bracknell Chamber of Commerce
Nick Kirby, Pegasus
Paula Taplin, Department of Work and Pensions
Gerald Hegarty, Bracknell Forest Council
Natasha Sedgwick, Berkshire Growth Hub
Simon Cridland, Bracknell Forest Council
Anneken Priesack, Bracknell Forest Council

In attendance: Tim Smith, Thames Valley Berkshire LEP

Action Points

Minute	Item
146	<p>Presentation from Tim Smith MBE, CEO of Thames Valley Berkshire LEP</p> <p>Tim Smith, Chief Executive of the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) attended the meeting to present on the work of the LEP</p> <p>Local Enterprise Partnerships had been established as a concept in 2011. The Thames Valley Berkshire LEP had been tasked by Government to develop and deliver a strategy for growth, implementing public funds released by Government, and co-ordinating with partners to advocate on behalf of Berkshire businesses.</p> <p>Thames Valley Berkshire LEP was set up as a small private company, with 14 staff employed. There were ten non-executive Directors, and a Scrutiny group which included Local Authority representatives. The LEP was driven by business volunteers.</p> <p>The LEP had published an impact report online, and would be publishing a delivery plan later in the year.</p> <p>The LEP invested in 51 projects in different areas across the region, using £171m in capital funds. These improvements had been focussed on infrastructure developments required to unlock housing growth. Other areas of work had been with schools, the Thames flood scheme, Smart City Cluster and work to support the Internet of Things. Local Authorities had financially supported the LEP through the Business Rates retention pilot in Berkshire, and this money would be reinvested into capital infrastructure projects.</p>

The LEP served as an advocate for Berkshire, and had worked to improve the Western rail access to Heathrow. The Southern rail access was also developing, and it was hoped that Network Rail would be submitting plans for further development.

The LEP had supported digital infrastructure in Berkshire, investing capital funds in the superfast Berkshire programme.

The LEP commissioned Oxford Innovation to deliver a business growth hub, which had engaged with 1000 businesses, supported 3000 businesses, and created 30 jobs.

The LEP had invested £1m capital funding into solution lab for STEMs, which would be co-located with training facilities. Young people would be taught by trainers alongside local business people in construction, healthcare, digital, finance, and health and social care.

The LEP had established an Enterprise Advisor network, to match 60 schools in the region with 60 business volunteers, overseen by 3 co-ordinators.

Although European funds were not given directly to the LEP, an investment strategy had been developed which had enabled £5m in EU funding into Thames Valley Science Park.

Tim commented that the life span of the LEP was limited according to political decisions, and Labour had proposed a reduction in the number of LEPs across the country.

The Berkshire Local Investment Strategy (BLIS) was the future plan of the LEP. Berkshire was second only to London in regard to economic output in the UK, with low unemployment and high housing growth. Berkshire had the highest concentration of foreign owned companies out of all the LEPs nationally. Tim commented that productivity was improving, but the rate of improvement was limited by the small number of highly productive businesses in the region. The BLIS aimed to promote productivity.

The LEP was consulting on the framework delivery plan, prior to submission to Government in 2020. Tim stressed how it was important to get buy-in from local businesses, to ensure the plan was focussed. The plan would be high level and strategic, in order to cater for the polycentric nature of the region.

Tim asked ESDP members to read the [draft BLIS on the LEP website](#), and to consider the 5 priorities arising in it.

Arising from discussion, the following points were noted:

- It was noted that skills and talent, digital infrastructure and inexpensive places to grow would be key areas to improve productivity in Berkshire. The LEP were planning to revisit research around co-location and co-working environments to assess the impact on productivity.
- It was proposed that improvement management would lead to improved productivity.
- The ESDP stressed that diversification across sectors was key, and that Berkshire could become top-heavy with financial and technology services.
- The ESDP discussed whether it was possible for productivity in Berkshire

	<p>to reach a peak.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was noted that much of the Bracknell Forest workforce were commuting and flexible working, and were not local people. • The research team within the LEP would monitor whether the BLIS had an impact, and growth would be recorded. • It was noted that the funding forecast for the LEP was dependent on the Government's profile, and funds were released based on the performance of the LEP. • The ESDP discussed whether house building in Berkshire had slowed as developers were sitting on land. It was suggested that some workers needed to work from home as they could not afford to live close to their workplace. <p>The ESDP thanked Tim for his presentation, and resolved to submit a response to the consultation. (Action: Bob Collis to collate)</p>
147	<p>Action Points from Last Meeting</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2019 were approved as a correct record.</p> <p>Arising from the minutes, it was noted that Bob Collis and Peter Smith had met and were formulating a basis for a future joint meeting between the Chamber of Commerce and the ESDP.</p>
148	<p>Sub-group Updates</p> <p><u>Employment and Skills subgroup</u> Nancy Lalor updated on the Employment and Skills subgroup which had been working to re-establish its Terms of Reference and workstream. There was a new focus on tackling unemployment amongst hard to reach young people in Bracknell Forest, and on ensuring any impacts on young people were measurable.</p> <p>Berkshire Apprenticeship scheme had come to present to the subgroup, and this presentation would be shared with the Partnership for information.</p> <p>The next subgroup meeting was scheduled for 30 April 2019, and all Partners were invited to attend if interested.</p> <p>The ESDP noted that James Taylor, of Activate Learning, had moved to Guildford under the college merger and had left the Partnership. Bob Collis led Partners in thanking James for his service to the ESDP and its Employment and Skills subgroup in particular.</p> <p><u>Infrastructure subgroup</u> Bob Collis advised Partners that the subgroup had revised its workstream 6 months ago. A key piece of recent work had been to support the Bracknell Forest Council Expression of Interest towards the Government's Future High Streets development.</p> <p>The subgroup had also been focussing on the following areas of work in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agile working and associated case studies

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electric vehicle charging • Engaging with the borough's natural estate <p>Arising from discussion , it was suggested that the subgroup could approach Silva Homes and Regus to speak to them about their agile working practices. (Action: Bob Collis)</p> <p>The subgroup had planned the upcoming outdoor meeting on 23 May 2019 for ESDP members at South Hill Park to learn about the benefits of businesses engaging with the natural estate. All Partners were invited to attend and book a place using the Eventbrite link.</p> <p>The photo competition was due to begin again in partnership with Bracknell Forest Council's Parks and Countryside team, following a successful competition last year.</p>
149	<p>ESDP Spring Event - 'A Walk and Talk in the Park'</p> <p>This update was discussed under the Infrastructure subgroup update.</p>
150	<p>BID Update</p> <p>Bob Collis updated Partners on the Business Improvement District.</p> <p>ESDP members were reminded that the first BID in Bracknell Forest was being established, and would cover the Western and Southern Industrial Areas. The district would serve both to fund improvements in the area, and to give a collective voice to businesses in the region. Business rate payers would fund the scheme through a levy.</p> <p>A ballot for adoption of the BID was scheduled for November 2019, and at least 50% of the businesses of rateable value had to support the scheme for the BID to be established. The ballot would ask the views of those businesses with more than £12k payable in business rates. If approved, a small not for profit organisation would be established to manage the BID and its affairs.</p> <p>A business plan was in development for circulation to businesses. Top issues raised in the latest feedback had been around having a single point of contact in the area to raise issues, raising the profile of the area, improving traffic flow and congestion, establishing a strong collective voice, implementing CCTV, improving broadband, and improving roads, buses and footways.</p> <p>A BID engagement event was planned for the end of June 2019, and details would be circulated to ESDP members.</p>
151	<p>Dates of Future Meetings</p> <p>16 July 2019 22 October 2019</p>

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Any Other Business

Peter Smith and Bob Collis presented an idea to hold a Small and Medium Enterprises survey to support those businesses in Bracknell Forest who employed under 50 people. The survey would be carried out by Ocean Consulting. The ESDP agreed this approach in principle, having discussed GDPR requirements. It was stressed that the relationship between SMEs and the ESDP should be mutually beneficial.

Pam Sharman invited Bob and Peter to attend an event for small businesses at Regus on 25 April 2019. Natasha Sedgwick advised that the Berkshire Growth Hub could support the survey process by publicising this through newsletters and on the website.