

Berkshire Prosperity Board

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17 June 2024

Together driving Economic Prosperity in Berkshire

- All six Berkshire Councils have formally agreed to set up a Joint Committee to be known as Berkshire Prosperity Board to drive Economic Prosperity in Berkshire.
- Core members : Bracknell Forest Council, Reading Borough Council, Slough Borough Council, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, West Berkshire Council and Wokingham Borough Council.
- Programme focussing on six thematic workstreams: health and inequalities; education and skills; affordable housing; sector development; strategic infrastructure and net zero.
- Business Board will be established to embed a strong, independent, and diverse local business voice into local decision-making.
- The Prosperity Board has agreed an Accountable Body (Wokingham Borough Council) to receive and manage any funds from Government (or other sources) on behalf of all six Berkshire Authorities.

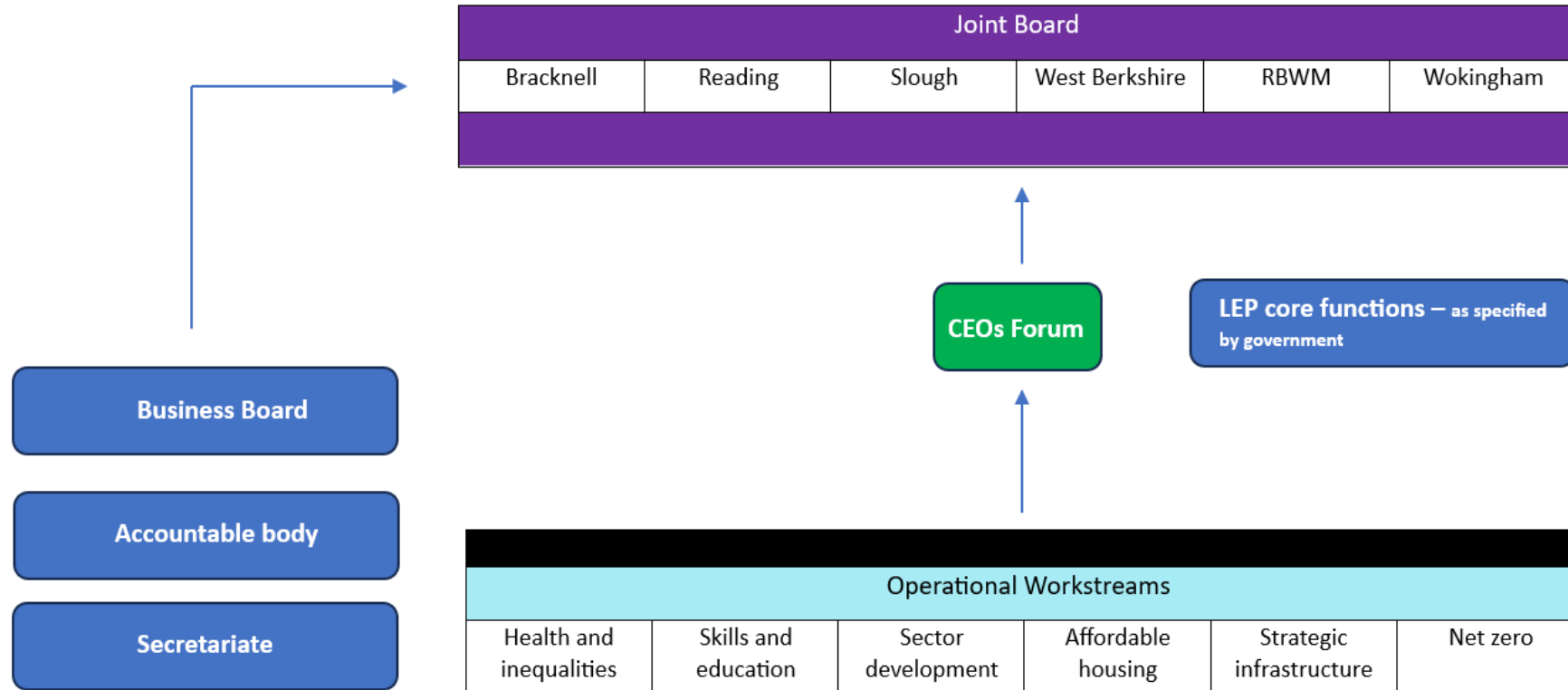
National changes leading to new ways of working

Government changed funding the Local Economic Partnerships (LEPS) from April 2024. With core functions transferred to Local Authorities These are:

- Economic Strategy and Planning. To develop a Berkshire-wide economic strategy within the first six months.
- Business Voice - To embed a strong, independent, and diverse local business voice into local decision-making on economic development issues.
- Government Programme Delivery - This function is needed in the future to continue to monitor the final stages of government programmes at the Berkshire level and ensure compliance with programme guidelines.

The LEP remains an independent company. Both Berkshire Leaders & the LEP have agreed to continue working in partnership by commissioning opportunities to support the Berkshire economy.

How will it fit together – proposed structure



The Berkshire Prosperity Board – What do we want it to deliver

- Sharing common goals across a functional economic area will provide exciting new opportunities for collaboration on economic development and growth. Providing more flexibility and influence than a single council would have on its own and enabling local authorities to speak with one voice.

In particular, Berkshire Authorities, through collaboration, will benefit from:

- Working together to a shared vision of inclusive and sustainable economic prosperity; addressing challenges and seizing opportunities whilst retaining the sovereignty of each Local authority.
- Having a strengthened case to Government and private investors for funding and greater investment for strategic projects across Berkshire.
- Acting as a vehicle to commission the Local Enterprise Partnership and others in response to the Government's review of Local Economic Partnerships.
- Having a stronger, collective voice in lobbying Government and other agencies. Taking a collaborative mindset in targeting external bodies effectively for the benefit of Berkshire.
- Advantageously positioning Berkshire in readiness for potential devolution proposals to benefit from additional responsibilities and funding opportunities.
- Working on six shared themes: health and inequalities, education and skills, affordable housing, sector development, strategic infrastructure and net zero.

The six workstreams

Theme	Focus
Education and skills (RBWM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Skills and workforce planning, including apprenticeships, to build and sustain a local pipeline of talent for our high-growth and foundational sectors, including social care and hospitality.• Support residents to upskill and access higher-paying, higher-quality career opportunities.
Social, accessible, and affordable housing (Wokingham)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developing housing for key workers, migrants, asylum seekers, supported accommodation, and people experiencing homelessness, some of which are putting pressure on temporary accommodation.• Exploring best practice policies to increase housing supply across the market, learning from other places and trialling innovation.• Developing a new model for housing delivery that unlocks viable sites, including those held in the One Public Estate, and brings forward investment from government and the private sector.

The six workstreams

Theme	Focus
Health and Inequalities (Slough)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hidden and overt health inequalities, both are key Berkshire issues. Build on new involvement by Wokingham in the Marmot programme.• Redirecting of funding from acute care to prevention by bringing diagnostic services closer to communities as well as early intervention and primary prevention through public health.• Local authorities working with ICB partners on funding allocation, for example SEND.
Strategic Infrastructure (Reading)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The four key infrastructure issues facing Berkshire and applying constraints on economic growth: energy, water, digital connectivity, transport.• Developing an evidenced understanding of needs across all four issues, and a single view of current plans and projects across Berkshire aiming to address these.• Creating a strategic infrastructure plan and investment framework.

The six workstreams

Theme	Focus
Net zero (Bracknell Forest)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a single view of needs and opportunities in decarbonising the Berkshire energy system, across all energy vectors and spaces (commercial and domestic).• Identifying opportunities for low or zero carbon energy production.• Developing and scaling energy efficiency programmes, including building retrofit, working to develop a market and supply chain, and links to housing quality for domestic interventions.• Working to reach Net zero by 2030.
Sector development (West Berkshire)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supporting existing and emerging sectors to secure investment, workspace and talent required for sustainable and inclusive growth, including urban and rural industries, foundational sectors and high streets.• Secure and increase foreign direct investment in key sectors in a holistic and strategic way across Berkshire, so that our key growth opportunities are addressed.

Business Board

- Business representation – embedding a strong, independent, and diverse local business voice into local democratic institutions.
- The importance of showing the business board how its advice is acted on.
- Business board might comprise local business leaders and relevant representative bodies to (a) provide the view of local businesses as part of regional decision making and (b) work with local leaders to create a broad economic strategy for the area.
- Suggested representation could include:
 - Business representative organisations, such as TV Chamber of Commerce and LEP
 - Core Sector representation, e.g. IT/Digital, Screen, Green skills, Pharma – who are the key players?
- Intention is to start with a small focussed group of attendees before potentially expanding to a wider membership.
- First meeting of the Business Board September 2024