

DORSET LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP BOARD

23 MAY 2023 FROM 1.30 PM TO 4.00 PM

VIRTUAL MEETING

MINUTES

Board Attendees:

Cecilia Buffon (CB) (Chair)
Ian Girling (IG)
Jim Andrews (JA)
Cllr John Beesley (JB)
Julia Howe (JH)
Nick Gaines (NG)
Nicola Newman (NN)
Paul Gough (PG)
Paul Read (PR)
Cllr Simon Gibson (SG)
Cllr Spencer Flower (SF)

Also Present:

Aidan Dunn (AD) (Dorset Council)
Anwen Jones (Cities and Local Growth Unit)
Kathryn Hill (KH) (Dorset LEP)
Nick Webster (NW) (Dorset Council)
Vinita Nawathe (VN) (Dorset LEP)

Apologies:

Luke Rake (LR)

| Item | Notes and Decisions | Action |
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| 1. | <p>Apologies were received for: Luke Rake.</p> <p>Declarations of Interest: no declarations of interest were declared.</p> | |
| 2. | <p>Chair's Update</p> <p>JB was attending this meeting so that BCP are represented ahead of the Council meeting that evening to decide the new Leader of the Council. JB did not expect to continue in his LEP role. He thanked the LEP board members and officers for all they are doing and wished everyone the very best.</p> <p>CB said she will miss JB's supportive, sometimes challenging and always insightful, contribution to Board discussions. She thanked him for all his help to her personally as she took on the role of Chair.</p> <p>NG informed the Board that Puff, Sofia Storey, and May Palmer both resigned in April. On behalf of the Chair and board members, he thanked both of them for the work they did for the LEP during their time on the Board.</p> <p>NG explained that due to a cabinet reshuffle at Dorset Council, Tony Ferrari has stepped down from the Dorset LEP Board and Cllr Simon Gibson has joined it. NG welcomed Simon to his first LEP Board meeting and said he looked forward to working with him going forward.</p> <p>NG informed the Board that recruitment for new Board members will be starting shortly, with interviews planned for June so new members can attend the July Board meeting.</p> <p>VN explained that The British Business Bank (BBB) have confirmed that they have accepted our proposed candidate for Dorset representative on the South West Investment Fund Stakeholder Advisory Board, Aaron Lawes who currently serves as independent member and Deputy Chair of our Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Aaron is a Partner at PFK Francis Clarke, a firm of financial advisors, with offices across the South West. VN suggested that ideally our BBB stakeholder board member should be a board member. CB and VN had spoken to Aaron and he had expressed a willingness to join the board. VN outlined the rules around co-option or open recruitment of board members and suggested in the immediate term AL could be co-opted to the LEP Board subject to Board agreement. NG asked the board if they would be willing to co-opt Aaron Lawes to the Board.</p> <p>Action: All agreed to co-opt Aaron Lawes to the LEP Board.</p> <p>NG highlighted the proposal for the next board meeting in July to be a face to face meeting held at the Battlelab. He highlighted the intention for this to be an extended strategy day meeting, including lunch. VN pointed out that there would be at least three new Councillors on the board for that meeting and if other new Board members can be recruited and agreed by then, they would be invited to that meeting. NG asked board members to make their availability known as soon as possible.</p> <p>NG went on to tell the Board that Mark Duddridge, Chair of CIOS LEP, died suddenly last week. Mark was a real champion for Cornwall and the wider South West and passionate about the potential of green energy projects in the</p> | <p>All agreed</p> <p>All noted</p> |

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| 2. | <p>Chair's Update Cont'd</p> <p>region. He was instrumental in gaining recognition for the GSW as a pan Regional Partnership and represented our region in discussions with the LEP network. He was a lovely person, kind, thoughtful and determined. We have sent our condolences and he will be greatly missed.</p> <p>NG gave an update on the GSW. A Chair has been appointed, Karl Tucker and recruitment for a Chief Executive is to take place, aiming to appoint by July.</p> <p>The GSW Programme Boards have been meeting to establish specific areas of interest to help form a clear evidence base for priorities. The Rural group have met, with that work being led by LR. All will bring their priorities to the next GSW Board planned for the 7 July. We are playing a very active role in all the areas.</p> <p>VN informed that we have been given more feedback from Government about funding and the constraints with which we operate. Government recognises another review will make it more challenging to recruit new Board members, so some requirements around board make up and processes had been relaxed temporarily.</p> <p>The Board member skills audit was mentioned and the importance of having a balanced board with skills to complement each other. VN agreed and said that the skills audit showed we lacked finance experience, so co-opting Aaron Lawes will address that straight away. It is important to get the right people round the table who can do the job.</p> | |
| | <p>Board Member's Updates</p> <p>SF informed the Board that it is expected that the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill will get Royal ascent in July. There is huge amount of different work sitting in there, so as and when it gets Royal ascent it will kick start a number of things.</p> <p>CB mentioned that a recent LEP Network report said there had been a change of direction regarding Levelling Up Directors, which will no longer be appointed.</p> <p>AJ updated that, initially when they were first announced, it was a very fast policy decision made to see if all 7 Directors could be appointed across the country. Only 2 or 3 candidates made it through and since that time there has been a re-think regarding were we clear as to what their role was going to be and is it really needed. So that policy strategy is being dropped, as it is felt that role is not needed.</p> <p>IG left the meeting at 1350</p> | |
| 3. | <p>Policy</p> | |
| 3.1 | <p>LMI Data and What It Means for Dorset</p> <p>NN highlighted some of the slides in the paper pack and board members discussed the implications of the data for Dorset.</p> | |

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| 3. | Policy | |
| 3.1 | <p>LMI Data and What It Means for Dorset Cont'd</p> <p>NN pointed out that the Local Skills Improvement Plan the low availability of people looking for work and that we appear to have full employment in Dorset. There is an increase in the number of people on long term sick and taking themselves out of the labour market. It was acknowledged this is a national issue.</p> <p>PG joined the meeting at 1358</p> <p>The discussion went on to salaries and that the average salary of people already employed is £36,000 to £39,000 at the moment but the average salary of job vacancies is significantly lower. It reflected a further issue in the job market in Dorset, that many of the vacancies are for more junior staff and the labour market isn't necessarily providing them. It was suggested that growing number of vacancies in earlier career roles was related to housing costs. It was suggested either we raise salaries or we build houses, or both, as 39% of the average salary – of those in work - is going on accommodation.</p> <p>JB noted that the issue of recruitment is at the worst point it has ever been for hospitality and care, and the less well paid in NHS. In hospitality it is having a real bite, the issues of pay rates is self-determining to some degree but the wage to cost of living crisis is a problem. There is a restaurant on the sea front that is now opening 5 days a week instead of 7 days a week all year round, as they cannot afford the costs. This will have an effect on the economy in the area.</p> <p>NG said that as an employer he almost gave up trying to attract young people into Dorset and adopted a strategy to re-invigorate for the older workforce. He suggested that attracting and retaining young people in the area is at the heart of all our challenges. He noted that all the vibrant economies of the world are dominated by lots of young people and lots of opportunities for them.</p> <p>Discussion continued around graduate retention, start-ups, particularly in creative and digital in related industries.</p> <p>PG informed that student retention is about 70%, with 25% from overseas. The distance students are travelling to university has been reducing by 5 miles per year for some time. They are attracted here and stay for a while but unless they can create the micro business and have incubator space they will leave. They need grow on space, business support and an R&D space. This is something that Universities can do quite well but it is not easy and needs support, affordable space and affordable housing.</p> <p>JA noted that international graduate retention is good and generally stable, post graduate students staying and working locally but this is causing a housing problem. A Government announcement has just been made that overseas students will no longer be able to bring dependants which will affect overseas students coming. 40% of our UK students are from about a 40 mile radius.</p> | |

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| 3.1 | <p>LMI Data and What It Means for Dorset Cont'd</p> <p>Graduates are going back to live with Mum and Dad as they can't afford housing. Unless we are address the housing issue particularly for the graduates, graduate retention is not going to change.</p> <p>CB informed that the NHS found that in bringing students through an apprenticeship route, people were more likely to stay.</p> <p>JH explained that the apprenticeship route is so bureaucratic for employers that it is not attractive. It takes weeks of negotiation and planning to get employers to offer the apprenticeships. It is harder to do an apprenticeship than a standard full time qualification.</p> <p>NG said he represented the LEP at the Dorset Apprenticeship Awards last week. The quality of apprentices was exceptional. Apprentices are always the employees that gave the most and the had the higher probability of sticking with you and being most passionate about your business. A lot of smaller businesses think it is too bureaucratic and too much work.</p> <p>PG said in speaking to Lesley Haige at AECC and Phil Sayles at B&P college, the route to degree apprenticeships has to be made easier. If there is anything the LEP can do, he would certainly want to be part of it. Help each other by pooling helpful hints and tips. It is not easy and should be made easier.</p> | |
| 4. | <p>CIC</p> | |
| 4.1 | <p>Skills Update</p> <p>NN informed the Skills Advisory Panel and Board (SAPB) was funded by the DfE and the LEP has been leading this. That funding ended at the end of March but the decision was taken to expand this Board and its remit. At the last Board meeting it was decided to continue and expand the membership so we can continue to work together. The point of the new Board will be to be aware of, observe share and advise on the whole skills and education piece in Dorset.</p> <p>CB stated she was delighted that it is continuing and it was one of the most needed elements of the work that we do. One of asks of the Skills Board was to put someone forward to represent the panel on the ICB and the ICP Boards</p> <p>Action: NN to bring the updated Terms of Reference for new the Board to the July Board meeting for approval.</p> <p>NN went on to say the draft Local Skills Improvement Plan is circulating around the Board and key stakeholders and will be submitted by the end of the week. She has received feedback from two people so far, who felt it was where they wanted it to be. It will be published shortly after formatting and will include recommendations. DfE didn't want us to talk about national issues, as they already know about them, but speak about local issues, for instance, temporary accommodation for people working in the tourism/hospitality sector for the summer.</p> | RD |

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| 4.1 | <p>Skills Update Cont'd</p> <p>CB we have an opportunity, as we sit with our local authority colleagues, this is our issue and this is what we need help with.</p> <p>NG suggested there was nothing worse when you are a business being constrained because you cannot get the staff. Your long term your strategy is to move out, automate like hell, net effect on economy of Dorset, fewer jobs, fewer people wanting to work here.</p> | |
| 4.2 | <p>Programmes Monitoring Report</p> <p>VN reminded the Board that we still report to BEIS twice a year on the monitoring we are still doing for the programmes that are closed down, the Local Growth Fund and Getting Building Fund. We have monitoring commitments for 5 years after the grants have been given out.</p> <p>One project is the Bournemouth International Growth programme and the other is the Poole Harbour programme. VN said she had received an update on Holes Bay from Future Places. The outcomes have changed, they expect to deliver more but outside of our monitoring period. They have been asked to provide an update at the September Board. Overall the programmes are fine, we have spent the money as we said we were going to do but the outcomes might have changed.</p> <p>VN informed the Board that the Careers Hub team have just won an award to provide Careers advice to primary schools and the LEP has been awarded £260,000 for business support going forward.</p> <p>Housing in Dorset was discussed. SF informed that last year Dorset Council delivered 525 houses and this year they are nudging towards 700. He explained there are a number of strands to what they are trying to do and if you don't have policy embedded in your local plan then you have no hooks to ensure you deliver on your plan.</p> <p>SG said that the local plan is the key bit and until the processes are in place, a good role for the LEP would be in building the economic case for house building. When it comes to evidence gathering and influencing political leaders having an independent voice is important and the LEP has a role in trying to shape the agenda on this and should start ASAP.</p> <p>JB said that with Holes Bay there are a number of developments that have consents or are leading towards consents. They won't conform with the 24/25 figure but suspect looking to quite a bulge in the numbers in a couple of years.</p> <p>CB informed that Matt Prosser runs a Housing Group for Dorset. NN said there is a need for accommodation, aswell as housing. We will not home grow working age people without accommodation, as if they have to come from somewhere else they need to live somewhere. It is not necessarily about housing but accommodation.</p> | |
| 4.3 | <p>Business Update</p> <p>VN take the paper as read and is for information only unless any questions.</p> | |

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| 5. | Minutes from the Last Meeting | |
| | The Minutes were agreed as an accurate reflection of the last meeting. There were no matters arising. | |
| 6. | Any Other Business | |
| | <p>Digital Skills and Learning Innovation Hub</p> <p>VN explained that BCP Council put out for tender a contract funded by the Towns Fund, for a Digital Skills and Learning Innovation Hub. We put together a consortium and RD put a bid together, taking over the shop in Boscombe at the front of the old Arcade. We have gone out to recruit a concierge for the shop and two people have been taken forward to second interview.</p> | |
| | <p>July Board Meeting</p> <p>NG informed the Board that the intention is to extend the July meeting to include a strategy session and the plan is to hold this at the Battlelab.</p> | |
| | <p>New Board Member Recruitment</p> <p>NG informed that we are advertising for new Board Members and the Nomination and Remuneration Committee will be interviewing in June. Any successful applicants will be circulated to Board members electronically for approval so we can appoint for the July meeting.</p> | |

Note: Date of Next Meeting – 27 July 2023 from 10.00 am to 3.30 pm at the Battlelab, Dorset Innovation Park