

**DORSET LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP BOARD**

**23 MARCH 2023 FROM 10.00 AM TO 12.30 PM**

**HELD AT THE ARTS UNIVERSITY BOURNEMOUTH**

**MINUTES**

**Board Attendees:**

Cecilia Buffon (CB) (Chair)  
Jim Andrews (JA)  
Luke Rake (LR)  
May Palmer (MP)  
Nick Gaines (NG)  
Nicola Newman (NN)  
Paul Read (PR)  
Cllr Philip Broadhead (PB)  
Cllr Spencer Flower (SF)  
Cllr Tony Ferrari (TF)

**Also Present:**

Jon Bird (JB) (Dorset Council)  
Kathryn Hill (KH) (Dorset LEP)  
Rebecca Phillips (RP) (Dorset LEP)  
Shelley Collins-Trevett (SCT) (Dorset LEP)  
Vinita Nawathe (VN) (Dorset LEP)

**Apologies:**

Anwen Jones (AJ)  
Aidan Dunn (AD)  
Ian Girling (IG)  
Cllr John Beesley (JB)  
Julia Howe (JH)  
Paul Gough (PG)  
Sophia Story (SS)

Item	Notes and Decisions	Action
1.	<p>Apologies were received for: Aidan Dunn, Anwen Jones, Ian Girling, Cllr John Beesley, Julia Howe, Paul Gough and Sophia Story.</p> <p>Declarations of Interest: no declarations of interest were declared.</p>	
2.	<p><b>Chair's Update</b></p> <p>CB started by thanking Drew Mellor for his time on the LEP Board and went on to welcome Cllr Philip Broadhead to the meeting.</p> <p>CB noted that the Board is again meeting and talking about another LEP review. She said that the Board had already put in place it's three year plan which had assumed no funding from Government from the outset. It was her recommendation and ask of the Board to keep delivering for Dorset. She commented that if we stay focussed on that plan we will succeed but if we get distracted we will fail.</p> <p>CB informed the Board that she has been appointed as Chair of the Integrated Care Board. She explained how they are using the leverage of the NHS as an anchor organisation. This work sits well alongside the work of the LEP.</p> <p>Board members expressed support of CB's comments and agreed the partnership was very important. The LEP Board is a convener and this is its greatest strength. It was agreed that a pan Dorset remit is really important.</p> <p>PB commented that the major capital projects and grants will be going to the local authorities but the LEP has moved really successfully into the skills agenda and offers a voice for business around this table that does not exist anywhere else. Need to harness the good work that is currently going on.</p> <p>SF said that he was very keen for a county deal with BCP and felt that was the only way to get substantial funding from Government. In the meantime, we need to carry on and deliver on what we already have.</p>	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Policy</b>	
3.1	<p><b>Implications of the Chancellor's Budget</b></p> <p>VN explained the background to her paper was the budget announcement and the various follow up meetings that took place last week. She said that the LEPs around the country are in different positions financially and operationally but all of them are companies. We are in a good position relatively because of all the hard work done last year in streamlining the organisation. We foresaw the potential of receiving no core funding when planning for 2022-25. Therefore, the funding we have been allocated together with our reasonable reserves and ongoing contracts enables us to focus on delivering our objectives over the next two years. During that period we should collectively determine what we want as a partnership for Dorset going forward.</p> <p>The department is conducting an information gathering exercise and has sent out a questionnaire which the LEP Chief Execs and the LAs have to respond to in the next few weeks. They want to better understand the different positions of LEPs around the country and the implications for removing the c£250k funding from 2024/25.</p> <p><b>Action: VN agreed to circulate the questionnaire for board members to see.</b></p>	VN

Item	Notes and Decisions	Action
3.1	<p><b>Implications of the Chancellor's Budget Cont'd</b></p> <p>VN considered that the Chancellor's position was not new as last year's funding letter had expressed the intention for LEP functions to be rolled into devolved local government structures by 2030. The implication of removing funding sooner was that they wanted this devolution process to be hastened.</p> <p>VN reminded Board Members that they are the Local Enterprise Partnership – the local economic partnership for the Dorset area - and that she, and the team, work for the LEP. She would like the Board to have more input into the agenda for the meetings.</p> <p>VN concluded that the Chancellor's announcement has no effect whatsoever on the LEP this year and little material effect on next year. She noted the positives of multisectoral partnership focussing on outcomes for the whole Dorset area. We have a year to determine what the priorities and model we want to work towards over the following year.</p> <p><b>Action: Board members discussed this position and were in general agreement.</b></p> <p>The discussion broadened out. VN suggested that while the LEP had a number of published strategies, alongside a data refresh we should also conduct a vision refresh. Where are we headed and where do we want to head may be on different trajectories to previously assumed given a series of economic shocks in recent years.</p> <p>TF agreed that trajectories might be different and pointed out that the LU funding had the potential to have improved the trajectory for Weymouth and surrounds.</p> <p>It was noted that over the next two years there will possibly be three refreshed administrations and so, it was possible that nothing substantial politically would happen during that time. It was acknowledged that politicians might have to wait for the outcomes of elections, but a strength of the LEP is that it does not. If we wait, for example with tackling issues like skills, we will be left behind. The faster we can align to a vision, the easier it is to direct swift action. The LEP is a convening body and so can pull together understanding of how things are affecting different parts of the economy to spur action.</p> <p>The Dorset Tourism Association was mentioned and the discussions that have taken place at their Board meeting on the difficulties of staffing experienced in the hospitality sector. A discussion then took place around careers advice and how the hospitality sector is not seen by some as a good career to take up. It is seen as a series of jobs rather than a good career path. The role of parents in the decisions of children and careers advice was further discussed and how you have to get parents on board. NN informed that the hospitality sector is currently not a priority of the local skills plan.</p> <p>LR informed the Board that he now Chairs the GSW Food, Farming, Fishing and Rural Group. He said this is an interesting project and provides the opportunity to do things at scale. They are building on the work already done by Dorset LEP and others.</p>	All agreed

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3.1	<p><b>Implications of the Chancellor's Budget Cont'd</b></p> <p>PB explained that BCP have done a big piece of work around what success looks like. What do we care about and what is our (BCP) brand, what do our residents want, what is important? They discovered that a lot of businesses move to BCP because of the lifestyle, the beach, the sea and so actually that is what we should focus on when selling the area.</p> <p>The discussion moved on to affordable housing and PR explained there is a lot of existing housing stock that needs to be retro fitted in order to meet energy efficiency standards, highlighting a skills shortage. PR pointed out that house building costs were the least of the hurdles to building houses. We actually do not have a housing problem in the area, we have a land problem and a planning problem. The model is wrong and so drives the wrong outcomes.</p>	
<b>4.</b>	<b>CIC Business</b>	
4.1	<p><b>Forward Plan</b></p> <p>VN apologised for the paper being sent out late but this was due to illness. She pointed out the paper was to show the high level objectives guiding the budget and there is more work to be done. She said she took the high level objectives we were given by Government and added a couple more. We need to capitalise on opportunities to bring money into the area. In regards business support, funding had not been confirmed but we are planning a suite of activities that complement what the local authorities are doing as laid out in the appendix to the Business update later in the board papers.</p> <p>The document was discussed and it was agreed that the high level objectives gave a frame and a focus for the draft budget, but more work is needed to be done on it.</p>	
4.2	<p><b>2023/24 Draft LEP Budget</b></p> <p>The budget was discussed and noted that this was a draft budget as not all bills or income had been confirmed.</p>	
4.3	<p><b>Finance, Audit and Corporate Risk Committee Update</b></p> <p>MP updated the Board on the recent FACR Committee meeting and a discussion took place.</p>	
4.3	<p><b>Nominations and Remuneration Committee Update</b></p> <p>JA updated the Board on the recent Nominations and Remuneration Committee meeting. He informed the board that one business Board Member was going to resign and this will mean we are no longer gender balance compliant. BEIS is aware of the need for flexibility during a challenging time for recruitment and retention for some LEP boards.</p> <p>Following the skills audit and looking at natural turnover, it was agreed that we need to recruit two new business Board members, one of whom should ideally have finance skills/experience. This should be open recruitment, however underrepresented groups and board skills should be targeted and suitable candidates encouraged to apply.</p>	

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5.	<b>For Noting</b>	
5.1	<p><b>Overview and Scrutiny Committee Update</b></p> <p>VN updated the Board on the recent Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.</p> <p>She explained that the LEP's structures mimic local authority structures and nomenclature but she thought that this Committee was actually an audit committee. She suggested removing the audit function from the FACR Committee and putting the function wholly with this one Committee. The FACR Committee would become the Finance and Corporate Risk Committee.</p> <p><b>Action: The Board agreed to remove the Audit function from the FACR Committee and put it in the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</b></p>	All agreed
5.2	<p><b>Business Update</b></p> <p>SCT introduced herself. She explained that we have heard about funding for next year but we do not know how much that will be yet. With business support, we are looking to complement what the local authorities will be doing, not duplicate.</p> <p>SCT went on to explain about the two pilot programmes we will be running, the Investor Readiness Programme and Strategic Business Review Programme. These are aimed at helping business be ready for when the British Business Bank's South West Investment Fund is launched. We will be continuing with the bid writing support which is something that has been really valuable for businesses. We will also be providing a horizon scanning service to assist businesses in identifying what grants are suitable for them to apply for.</p> <p>SCT explained that the Dorset LEP website has been updated with lots of information on business support, trying to join up all the support available from the different sources. She also said that she was going to get more involved with the Dorset BIDs.</p> <p>SCT informed the Board of the Dorset Ambassadors Launch Event taking place on 17 April. So far 41 people have booked on.</p> <p>She also mentioned that the final Invest in Dorset Prospectus on the defence sector should be finalised in next week or two. All the prospectuses are available on the Dorset LEP website.</p> <p><b>Action: SCT to send out a copy of each Invest in Dorset prospectus to the Board.</b></p>	SCT
5.3	<p><b>Skills Update</b></p> <p>RP introduced herself. She leads the Careers Hub team based in the LEP and works with teams in both councils. She explained the team works with 80 schools across Dorset to help them deliver on the Gatsby Benchmarks. They work with school leavers, careers leads and businesses. They run lots of events working with partners engaging businesses. There are a lot of large events going on in the BCP area that are difficult to replicate in Dorset Council are</p>	

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5.3	<p><b>Skills Update Cont'd</b></p> <p>owing to the concentration of schools and businesses, but the events they have run have been really successful, for example the recent North Dorset Careers event that brought a number of schools together with businesses (750 young people of which 15% SEND).</p> <p>The earlier board discussion was referenced. RP explained that the Careers Hub hold Careers and Coffee mornings and these are a good way to engage with parents. In regard to the hospitality sector, the Marriott Hotel and Brewhouse and Kitchen are cornerstone employers.</p> <p>Apprenticeships were mentioned and NN remarked feedback they received was that everyone says they like the idea but not the practicality of them.</p> <p>RP explained that the Dorset Careers Hub works for every young person to take their next best steps. They work with 11-19 year olds.</p>	
<b>6.</b>	<b>Minutes from the Last Meeting</b>	
	The Minutes were agreed as an accurate reflection of the last meeting. There were no matters arising.	
<b>7.</b>	<b>Any Other Business</b>	
	There was no other business raised.	

Note: Date of Next Meeting - 23 May at 1.30 pm