

DORSET LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP (LEP) OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
27 April 2021
MS Teams Video Conference
MINUTES
Committee Attendees:

Cllr Lawrance Williams (BCP Council)
 Lorna Carver (LC) (Dorset LEP)
 May Palmer (MP) (private sector representative)
 Cllr Paul Hilliard (PH) (BCP Council)
 Sara Uzzell (SU) (Dorset LEP Board member)

Also Present:

Dr Corrina Osborne (CO) (Dorset LEP)
 Daniela Doncakova (DD) (Dorset LEP)
 Finn Morgan (FM) (Dorset LEP)
 Kathryn Hill (KH) (Dorset LEP)

Apologies

Aaron Lawes (AL) (independent member)
 Cllr Dave Bolwell (DB) (Dorset Council)
 Cllr Jon Andrews (JA) (Dorset Council)

Item	Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest	Action
1.	Apologies were received from AL, DB and JA. No declarations of interest were received.	
2.	Agree Draft Minutes	Action
	The Minutes were agreed as an accurate reflection of the last meeting.	
3.	Actions from last meeting	Action
	All actions from the previous meetings have been addressed. Minutes from the September 2020 meeting were approved by the Committee members.	
4.	Managing Conflict of Interest	Action
	<p>CO briefly ran through her paper explaining there are a number of different policies informing our Conflicts of Interest process, which is based on national best practice. Our policies outline the processes for Board Members, Committee Members and Dorset LEP staff to declare and report interests.</p> <p>SU assured that it was regular practice for Board members to be asked to step out of the meeting if a topic they have a conflict with comes up as the LEP Board take conflicts very seriously.</p> <p>The Committee was content that the Conflicts of Interest processes are robust.</p>	
5.	SMEs Engagement in the Business Support Offer	Action
	<p>FM ran through his presentation. He introduced himself and explained his role within the LEP team.</p> <p>He informed that we cannot give financial advice but can signpost businesses</p>	

5.	SMEs Engagement in the Business Support Offer Cont'd	Action
	<p>to finance available and this is an area that will be expanded over the next 12 months. FM gave an example of where signposting had worked successfully.</p> <p>SU highlighted the success of FM in his role which is extremely challenging as he is required to know everyone and everything and connects people together. LC agreed and stated FM has the business support landscape at his fingertips.</p> <p>FM went on to explain the concept of Dorset Gateway; that in 2018 it was brought in-house and FM's role was created and that, since then, the support has grown over the years, through accessing greater funding and employing more staff. The LEP has bid for and won more funding which has allowed us to increase our activity, like offering the bid writing support. We have supported 1,400 businesses, from a light touch support to quite intensive support. We have enabled £800,000 of UK grant funding during the last 12 months and we have helped secure £1.5m Innovate UK funding for Dorset.</p> <p>FM informed the group about the Peer Networks and that the success of delivering this through Dorset LEP enabled us to secure more funding this year and receive one of the highest funding allocations of all LEPs which is impressive given the size of Dorset in comparison to other regions.</p> <p>FM mentioned the EU transition. Dorset LEP successfully bid for funding by showing what support we are planning to provide. The plan was until 31 March but the support will be in and around for a longer period.</p> <p>FM mentioned the support provided for smaller businesses over last twelve months through Crowdfund. He explained applications are assessed through a scoring matrix and the recent 'Still Open' campaign - shopaappy - an on-line commerce platform to help provide town areas across Dorset to get on-line. There are currently 78 business across 5 towns in Dorset who have registered with this platform.</p> <p>Action: FM's presentation to be circulated to the Committee</p>	
6.	Project Lifecycle: Case Study Example	Action
	<p>DD ran through her presentation explaining the lifecycle of a project from beginning to end.</p> <p>She began by explaining about the Local Growth Deal funding. This was received in three tranches and was a 6-year funding scheme. Dorset LEP Board funded projects that best fitted with the strategy at the time. She explained there was an initial call for projects and explained the process of how projects were assessed. She then explained about the project pipeline and that applicants were asked to submit their business case and these were then assessed and value for money independently reviewed. Each project was assessed by a panel and a short list was compiled and submitted to the LEP Board for approval subject to full business case preparation.</p> <p>DD explained that independent due diligence assessors reviewed all full business cases and provided information on all aspects, including state aid for Dorset LEP Board. The Board are then required to give final approval for applications.</p>	

6.	Project Lifecycle: Case Study Example Cont'd	Action
	<p>Once approved Dorset LEP works with applicants to reach the Grant Agreement and all conditions that must be met before any funding is released. Projects are required to report every 2 months supplying various information and the Dorset LEP Project Manager will work closely with each project on this.</p> <p>LW thanked DD for the interesting and comprehensive presentation and asked whether that was a typical timeline or can it vary. SU commented that the process is the same but timelines can vary due to the complexity of some larger projects than others.</p> <p>The Committee was content that the project lifecycle process was clear and had no further questions.</p>	
7.	Project Pipeline: Themes	Action
	<p>LC explained that the most recent project pipeline was part of a 10 month process to create the Dorset Investment Prospectus and ran through her presentation on this. She explained the processes undertaken in the creation of the document.</p> <p>LC explained that having a pipeline is essential in the event of any future funding being announced from government and explained that the proposals are Expressions of Interest and have not undergone due diligence nor been ranked. She ran through the four main themes of future.</p> <p>LW said he would have to declare an interest in Wessex Fields as it is in his Ward and no further details were discussed in the meeting.</p> <p>LC mentioned there has been a £200m funding programme into Dorset over the last six years and that the future focus is around how to build on what we already have and how to build on the unique selling point for Dorset.</p> <p>PH asked if funding for LEPs will be reduced. LC stated that there is funding in place for this year. There has been talk of future capital funding and whether this should go through Local Authorities. She highlighted that whether this comes through the LEP or anyone else, Dorset should be really prepared to turn up to the table and say this is what our offer is, this is what we can deliver and the Investment Prospectus enables this.</p> <p>The Committee thanked LC for the comprehensive outline and were content that there is a thematic pipeline in place and had no further questions.</p>	
8.	Support Provided to Dorset Council Area	Action
	<p>LC ran through the presentation explaining the support provided to the Dorset Council and rural areas.</p> <p>The number of projects which were awarded funding were almost the same and had the similar success rate however notably BCP project applications often had a significantly higher financial value from that of the Dorset Council area. LC emphasised that as per DD's presentation there is a rigorous project appraisal process and assessed on Value for Money. S151 Officer also confirms Value for Money for each project.</p> <p>LC highlighted a number of projects and initiatives supporting rural and the Dorset Council area including capital projects and Careers Hub and the Dorset Gateway.</p>	

8.	Support Provided to Dorset Council Area Cont'd	Action
	<p>LC informed the group that Dorset LEP is only one source of funding and our funding has a specific focus; we are funded by Ministries of Housing, Communities & Local Government and Business, Education and Industrial Strategy and that is what the funding is for in the broadest sense.</p> <p>LC ran through the governance structure of Dorset LEP and mentioned the Rural Enterprise Group and how it liaises with groups like LEADER, DEFRA, etc and the Local Nature Partnership.</p> <p>LC then explained how Dorset LEP works with the local MPs.</p> <p>PH emphasized that there needs to be a move away within Dorset from thinking about BCP and Dorset Council as to external investors and government we should have a united front for Dorset and the committee agreed. LW added that Dorset is one entity from the LEP point of view, just think Dorset.</p> <p>Action: The presentation will be circulated to the Committee.</p>	KH
9.	Future Work Programme	Action
	<p>The Committee discussed the future work programme and for the next meeting it was agreed that topics covered would include sharing best practice with other LEPs and activity around energy and digital connectivity. Information as to how we advertise/ market Dorset LEP to the business world will also be discussed.</p>	
10.	Highlights for Board Update	Action
	<p>CO suggested that the LEP Board update paper cover an overview of the different presentations that were given today and what the Committee is focussing on for the next meeting and this was agreed.</p> <p>The Committee asked that the paper highlighted the positive nature of Dorset LEP in helping the breadth of businesses across the county and the proactive nature and willingness to support activity that benefits the whole of Dorset.</p>	
11.	Any Other Business	Action
	<p>No other business was tabled.</p>	

Note: Date of Next Meeting – 31 August 2021