

DORSET LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP RURAL ENTERPRISE GROUP COMMITTEE

MINUTES

17th June 2021 11:00 – 12:00

MS Teams Meeting

Attendees:

Luke Rake (LR) Chair	Dorset LEP and Kingston Maurward College (KMC)
David Walsh (DW)	Dorset Council (DC)
Neil Wedge (NW)	Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils (DAPTC)
Tom Munro (TM)	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Dorset AONB)
Laura Zisa-Swann (LZS)	Dorset LEP
Will Bond (WB)	Alaska Ecological Contracting Ltd (AEC)

Guest attendee:

Cecilia Buffon (CB)	Dorset LEP
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Apologies:

Lorna Caver (LC)
Martin Cox (MC)
William Langer (WL)
Martin Sutcliffe (MS)
Ian Alexander (IA)
Imogen Davenport (ID)
Nicola Bailey (NB)
Louise Stratton (LS)

Item	Subject/Title	Action owner
1.	Welcome and Apologies Apologies noted. LR welcomed CB to the meeting and thanked her for attending. He provided CB with an overview of the REG. LR advised that Wendy Cunningham will no longer cover the role of the REG secretariat with LZS now taking the role on.	
2.	Declarations of Interest None declared.	
3.	Minutes of Last Meeting (03rd March 2021) The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record. <u>Matters arising from the meeting held on the 3rd March 2021</u> NB agreed (meeting 16/12/20) to put local plan on the agenda at her next meeting for local businesses to give their views and to invite LR to the meeting.	NB

	<p>LR has shared the Investment prospectus</p> <p>DW gave a Dorset Local Plan update. Consultation responses are currently being assessed and the draft plan is expected in the Autumn when it will go into a formal consultation period.</p> <p>LR thanked people for their responses to the Kingston Maurward Strategic Plan and advised this is still in review with the final draft expected in September.</p>	
4.	<p>Investment Prospectus Update</p> <p>CB gave an overview with main points covering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The potential shift in focus from capital spend will have some impact on the Investment Prospectus • The prospectus' pipeline projects still align with local authority plans so work is continuing to create and develop these programmes • Agriculture and agritech are of key focus as well as high potential areas such as health, defence and SMART infrastructure 	
5.	<p>LEP review</p> <p>CB gave an update to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministers are currently discussing the future of LEPs and how funding will be supplied to them. Discussions are around evolved LEPs and with the levelling up funds going to LA's the capital focus of LEP's is expected to change • The review is expected to complete by the summer but this could be delayed until the end of the year • Whatever the outcome of the review Dorset LEP will remain a supporting and convening business led organisation to ensure plans are delivered. • Advised that Lorna Carver will be leaving Dorset LEP and there will be an interim replacement until the LEP review is complete <p>Discussion followed with LR commenting that the outcome of the review will impact on the REG's role. Currently the REG provides a good convening forum but concern was voiced over if this will change if no capital funds are provided to Dorset LEP and would the committee lose some appeal to members without access to funds. TM noted the lack of influence the Committee has over investment decisions and suggested if this could be strengthened somehow maybe through Dorset Council and Shared Prosperity Funds the REG will continue to be attractive.</p> <p>WB and LR discussed the lack of rural business representation within the Committee and a key function of the REG is to bring rural businesses together with other key partners to lobby and discuss challenges and opportunities. LR suggested that this be looked at further with a focus on how to get more businesses involved from key areas such as farming and land management.</p>	
6.	<p>Member Updates</p> <p>TM (AONB)</p>	

	<p>In additional to the national grid project work has focused on acquiring a new Agriculture Transition Plan (DEFRA) fund under the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme. Dorset AONB has £3m to distribute over the next 3 years to cover projects that will deliver at least one outcome in the following areas climate, people, nature, and place. The fund can be used to help farm businesses gain advice on restructuring following the loss of the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) and how to capitalise on new public money schemes.</p> <p>Discussion followed with WB giving explanation of old funding BPS and the new ELMS funds. Concern was voiced as there will be a transition period where BPS payments will be down before the new funding increases which could be critical for some. WB highlighted the income Dorset is receiving through environmental schemes such as AONB, National England studentships, DEFRA and potential increase to private sector funding. The environment sector offers scope for growth for Dorset. LR further pointed out the link between environment and the one health agenda.</p> <p>NW (DAPTC) They are eagerly waiting on the next round of engagement following a high response rate on the Dorset Local Plan consultation. They are working closely with DC with regards to 5G and how to utilise available voucher schemes. Pro-enterprise activity is happening with Jurassic Fibre and Wessex Internet around fibre hubs in the north of the county whilst trying to encourage more engagement from smaller parishes in response to the call for evidence. Parishes have seen a benefit to online engagement as it has meant greater reach within the communities which highlights the importance of the county's connectivity. Concern was raised over possible migration due to connectivity issues as working patterns in the rural community change with more reliance on online and highlighted the importance of addressing this issue. There is interest in the recovery of the highstreets and the effort into rejuvenating these areas and the climate and environmental agenda and how the parish can push forward these initiatives.</p> <p>DW (DC) Work is underway with town councils in terms of reopening the high street safely and delivering the Welcome Back Fund to get the town and highstreets ready for visitors again. Currently figures are looking promising showing footfall returning and COVID safety measures are working. While this is promising they is a need to be cautious as town retail trends were effected pre COVID so need to wait and see what the new normal will be. Support is being given to businesses with full allocation of the Additional Restrictions Grant with hope of additional grant allocation being secured which would focus on sectors that haven't received support so far. Submission has been made to the Community Renewal Fund and finalising bid submission for the Levelling Up Fund with a focus on Weymouth and Portland and the regeneration agenda, innovation and jobs.</p> <p>WB (AEC) Mentioned that renewable energy such as solar panels is of interest at the moment but BREXIT has disrupted both the material supply chain and the labour market. While the economy may have slowed for some areas the construction economy is picking up quickly but materials have significantly increased in price which is stalling renewable energy installations.</p>	
7.	Board Report	

	<p>LR highlighted two key areas to bring to the Board</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How the LEP Review outcome will shape the REG's future role 2. It is agreed that the REG has an important role and focus needs to be on promoting the committee and how we can reach and recruit new potential members <p>Action: LR to work with DC and Dorset LEP on promotion of REG to new businesses and key partners following the LEP Review outcome</p>	LR
8.	<p>Any other business</p> <p>LR advised that Will Langer is leaving CLA and selection for a replacement to attend the REG going forward is under way</p>	LR

Note: Date of Next Meeting – 17th September 2021 11:00 - 12:00