

Report to TEC

Committee: TEC Select Committee
Report Title: Economic Development in Bucks
Author: Scrutiny Inquiry Group
Contact Officer: Kelly Sutherland

Purpose of Item

To seek the agreement of the TEC Committee to approve this report and recommendations to Cabinet, as well as endorse the accompanying Guide to Economic Development in Bucks produced by the Inquiry Group.



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Inquiry Methodology

Key Findings & Evidence

Recommendations

Appendix 1 – See separate slide ‘Guide to Understanding Economic Development in Bucks’



Inquiry Methodology

- March/April/May 2016 – Evidence Gathering
- Met with - Martin Tett, Leader and Neil Gibson, Interim CEO of BCC
 - Philippa Batting, MD and Rupert Waters, Head of Research, Buckinghamshire Business First
 - Andrew Smith, Chairman and Richard Harrington, Chief Executive, Buckinghamshire Thames Valley LEP
 - Ruth Farwell and Jackie Campbell, Bucks Skills Hub, BTVLEP
- Conducted telephone interview with Tomas Pukalski, Framework Digital, a tenant in the Porters Lodge, Old County Hall
- Invited feedback from District Council representatives on BTVLEP
- Desk top research to provide national context alongside local intelligence



Summary of Key Findings

- The number of organisations involved in economic development means that it is a complex landscape and it can be difficult for laypeople to understand who does what. **A key outcome from the Inquiry is a short Guide to Economic Development in Bucks for Members which accompanies this report.**
 - Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF), BCC's key delivery partner, is performing well and providing value for money services.
 - Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (BTVLEP) is 'punching above its weight' in many respects. The Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) was a collaborative effort which provides a business plan for 'Team Bucks'.
 - The 2015 LOCALIS report found that less than one in three LEPs published their annual accounts, under half published an Annual Report and a third were not publishing minutes of Board meetings. However BTVLEP's website is user friendly and contains all this information and their Assurance and Accountability Framework.
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Summary of Key Findings

- Many young people lack workplace skills when leaving school and the BTVLEP Skills Board is working proactively to address this by linking schools and businesses in Bucks.
- The shifting sands created by devolution across the UK and efforts to modernise local government in Buckinghamshire and in neighbouring counties will create a challenging environment for BTVLEP going forward, as consensus and collaboration have been key to its success to date.
- It is vital to have a strong Buckinghamshire voice on the national stage to ensure that Bucks residents get the best deal and the County receives much needed investment. BCC is providing this via its leading role in the Strategic Alliance and sub-regional developments.



Conclusions & Evidence

Evidence	Key Finding
Inquiry Group members had an awareness of different organisations but not their roles or how linked together.	The landscape is hard to understand, which led to the idea of developing a user friendly Guide to Economic Development in Bucks.
No Member Briefings have been held on economic development. High knowledge amongst Cabinet but not across all Members.	All Members would benefit from a greater insight into Economic Development.
The KPIs for 2015/16 were achieved with significant over achievement.	Buckinghamshire Business First is performing well and delivering value for money.
Expertise in economic development is concentrated in BBF & a few senior Council officers.	The lean nature of TEE means that knowledge of economic development is concentrated in a few senior individuals. It would be useful to raise awareness of key ED issues more widely amongst officers, as well as Members.

Conclusions & Evidence

Evidence	Key Finding
<p>Businesses in Bucks find that school leavers lack workplace skills.</p>	<p>This echoes the findings of the 2014 Select Committee Inquiry, 'Young People Ready for Work'. It is important that links between business and schools are strengthened and BTVLEP's Skills Board and their operational team are leading this agenda.</p>
<p>Martin Tett and Martin Tugwell advised of role of the Strategic Alliance & the direction of travel of Government in seeking to channel resources to sub-regional level.</p>	<p>The role of the Council in sub-regional groups is vital for speaking up for Bucks residents.</p>
<p>Website good for BTVLEP – includes published reports/minutes of Board meetings and copy of the Assurance and Accountability Framework.</p> <p>Proposal for development of Sub-regional body</p>	<p>Governance arrangements need to be clear and transparent for all organisations, especially where they are closely linked.</p>

Recommendations to Cabinet

- 1. That Cabinet should ask the Bucks Skills Hub Team to provide a briefing to all County Councillors to enable them to act as Ambassadors for the work of the Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership Skills Board and encourage schools and businesses in their division to engage with the Bucks Skills Hub.**
 - 2. That the Scrutiny Guide to Economic Development in Buckinghamshire should be promoted to all Members and supported by a Member Briefing to ensure that Members can gain a greater insight into this issue.**
 - 3. That the Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership should present its annual report to County Council, in order to raise awareness of its activities in promoting economic development in Buckinghamshire.**
 - 4. That should a key decision be taken to develop England's Economic Heartland's Strategic Transport Forum into a sub-national Transport Body, Cabinet will ensure that the TEC Select Committee and Regulatory and Audit Committee will have the opportunity to consider any implications for the Council's operational and governance arrangements respectively.**
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Appendix 1

We have produced an accompanying guide to economic development which is available for all Members....

