

Report for:	Buckinghamshire Shadow Executive
Meeting Date:	3rd December

Title of Report:	Local Enterprise Partnerships Boundary Overlaps
Shadow Portfolio Holder	Cllr Martin Tett
Responsible Officer	Neil Gibson
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Recommendations:	Option 1 is the preferred option as this gives the new Buckinghamshire Council a stronger link into central government through the BLEP. This will ensure that funding levered by BLEP will be spent wholly in Buckinghamshire rather than shared amongst a wider area.
Corporate Implications:	As per the structural change orders, the membership of both the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) and Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership (BLEP) will carry forward into the new council on day one. In order to meet the requirement from MHCLG to remove the overlap of membership, action will need to be taken by the Shadow Executive to give notice to one of the LEPs on behalf of the new authority. The financial Implications are set out within the report.
Options: (If any)	Option 1: Recommend Buckinghamshire Council withdraw membership from the SEMLEP the council are a member of BLEP only. Option 2: Buckinghamshire Council withdraw membership from the BLEP and remain a member of SEMLEP.
Reason:	

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To make a recommendation about the new authority's membership of a Local Enterprise Partnership, addressing the overlap of membership in the Buckinghamshire area between the Buckinghamshire LEP (BLEP) and the South East Midlands LEP (SEMLEP).

2. Content of Report

- 2.1 All five sovereign authorities are currently members of BLEP. Aylesbury Vale is also a member of SEMLEP.
- 2.2 As per the structural change orders, as AVDC are a current member of SEMLEP, on 1st April 2020, this will transfer over and Buckinghamshire Council will become a member. This is the same for BLEP, which means the new authority will be a member of two LEPs.
- 2.3 The Government have recently written to the Local Enterprise Partnerships requesting that a plan for how to remove boundary overlaps are sent to MHCLG by 12th December 2019. (Appendix A) This means that the Shadow Executive need to address the BLEP/SEMLEP overlap ahead of vesting day.
- 2.4 There are two main options for the removal of the overlap, one to give notice to SEMLEP and the second to look at whether the Buckinghamshire Council should give notice to BLEP join any other LEP to create a larger partnership area.
- 2.5 There have been several reviews about which LEP areas Buckinghamshire could be part of. As a major area in the Oxford/Cambridge Arc, the Buckinghamshire Council could join any of the surrounding LEPs to get the benefits of being part of a wider area. However, these benefits will also be outweighed by increased competition for government funding from the other local authority members of the LEPs.
- 2.6 Option one is the preferred option, mainly due to the Buckinghamshire Growth Board decision.
- 2.7 In September 2019 the Shadow Executive were asked to consider and subsequently agreed the formation of a Growth Board for the Buckinghamshire area.
- 2.8 The following background was given to establishing a Buckinghamshire Growth Board.
 - 2.8.1 With the emergence, and recent increasing profile of a number of significant strategic national conversations involving Buckinghamshire, there is an established need for the public bodies within the county to come together under a clear vision for the future supported by effective delivery framework governance. This need has been brought into clearer focus more recently in discussions with the Ministry for Housing Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) regarding the formation of 'sub-regional growth boards' and associated 'growth packages' to "drive forwards our shared ambitions for the wider Oxford-Cambridge Arc".
 - 2.8.2 A Buckinghamshire Growth Board will ensure the right platform, on Buckinghamshire geography, to align the relevant public bodies and the BLEP for delivering a holistic and place-shaping approach to growth and development.
 - 2.8.3 The establishment of a Buckinghamshire Growth Board is consistent with equivalent blocks in the Arc (Oxfordshire, Cambridgeshire, and the Central Area) and enables a Buckinghamshire discussion with key national and regional partners (including Central Government).
 - 2.8.4 A case for this was discussed and supported at a member meeting in July 2019 and supported by the MHCLG as a key 'block' for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. Going forward, Central Government will look to the Buckinghamshire Growth Board to deliver appropriate expertise and input when considering matters such

as the Autumn Comprehensive Spending Review and other Arc development.

- 2.9 Recorded in the decision notice of the Shadow Executive meeting was the following note:
- 2.9.1 MHCLG anticipate that Buckinghamshire LEP will be the LEP member of the Bucks Growth Board and SEMLEP the LEP member of the Central Growth Board.
- 2.10 With the above in mind, in order to reap the benefits of the Buckinghamshire Growth Board, the Buckinghamshire Council would need to be members of the BLEP.
- 2.11 On 13th November 2019, the BLEP Chairman presented this to their Board and they agreed that they would await the decision from the Shadow Executive before responding to Nadim Zahawi. Their recommendation however will be to have Buckinghamshire Council as a member of BLEP only.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 As part of their SEMLEP membership, AVDC have benefitted from funding which has enabled the development of large regeneration schemes such as The Exchange in Aylesbury Town Centre. There has also been financial support for Enterprise Zones such as Silverstone.
- 3.2 At the time of this report, AVDC has no active funding bids with SEMLEP. There are however some outstanding administration elements related to the recent Exchange project which will need to be fulfilled regardless of the decision of the Shadow Executive.
- 3.3 This means that although the Buckinghamshire Council could lose out on some funding from SEMLEP, a removal of the boundary overlap would mean that the BLEP could lever in government funding for the whole Buckinghamshire Council area rather than be in competition with SEMLEP for funding for the Aylesbury Vale area.
- 3.4 The BLEP have noted the following regarding the overlap –
- 3.4.1 “The rationale and benefits of the overlap removal are very clear and were set out explicitly in our original response [to MHCLG] in September 2018. These include the clear alignment of the Functional Economic Area, Travel to Work regions and areas of productivity as well as an overview of the performance and impact of the two LEPs in the area of overlap over the preceding 5 years.”

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 With either option, SEMLEP/BLEP will need to receive notice of membership from the Buckinghamshire Council as per their governance arrangements to ensure that the overlap is removed.
- 4.2 The final decision to give notice to either of the LEPs sits with the sovereign authorities, so the recommendation is that the current membership remains until Vesting Day at which point Buckinghamshire Council will have given notice in the required time period to ensure that the new council continues as a member of only one LEP.

5. Other Key Risks

- 5.1 Option two for the Buckinghamshire Council to join SEMLEP rather than BLEP carries risks that the new council will be unable to lever significant funding in future spending reviews from MHCLG, as well as being unable to fully utilise the Buckinghamshire Growth Board function.

6. Dependencies

- 6.1 As outlined in the letter from MHCLG to the LEP, the BLEP are dependent the Shadow Executive in order to secure capacity grant funding.

7. Consultation

- 7.1 Not applicable.

8. Communications Plan

- 8.1 Once a decision is made, a communications plan will be developed.

9. Equalities Implications

- 9.1 Not applicable.

10. Data Privacy Implications

- 10.1 Not applicable.

11. Next Steps

- 11.1 Once a decision is made, work will need to be undertaken with the relevant LEP to understand the governance arrangements and give notice from Buckinghamshire Council in a timely manner.

Background Papers	Establishment of a Buckinghamshire Growth Board Shadow Executive Report 10 th September 2019.
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