



Extract from Cabinet minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Tuesday 14 February 2023 in The Oculus, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury HP19 8FF, commencing at 10.00 am and concluding at 12.26 pm.

Members present

M Tett, Cllr A Macpherson, S Bowles, S Broadbent, J Chilver, A Cranmer, C Harriss, P Strachan, M Winn and J Jordan

Others in attendance

D King, P Martin and R Stuchbury

Agenda Item

13 Buckinghamshire Place Based Growth Model

The Levelling Up White Paper and supporting draft legislation provided Buckinghamshire with the opportunity to take control and address levelling up, regeneration and innovation priorities. Ideally Buckinghamshire was seeking a case for a 'Level 2 plus' County Deal that could result in devolution of both capital funds and powers through the award of new local flexibilities and freedoms. However, whether or not the Government continued to proceed with county deals, or indeed allow Level 2 plus deals, the Council were collectively agreed that there was a need to synthesise current work in this space into a better aligned governance structure, even though no funding had been received. As mentioned under the Hot Topics item Buckinghamshire had the Opportunity Bucks Programme which was concentrating on 10 wards.

While national policy and government funding lay outside of the Council's control the Council have the opportunity to reorganise locally to ensure that the Council was making the best use of limited resource. The proposed new model of governance would ensure that the Council was all aligned to a place based common vision and plan and provide the broadest platform from which to address growth and cohesion priorities. The new proposed Growth Board represented a place based approach where thematic activity included health, economy and physical environment which could be coordinated to best effect. Closer integration should allow the Council to retain the strength of organisations and coordinate activity through a common Place Based Growth Board framework. A Government review had also proposed a number of changes in order to strengthen Local Enterprise Partnerships to help deliver proposals outlined in the Industrial Strategy White Paper. Having a single body for

economic development meant closer collaboration for the Growth Board and the LEP with a series of supporting boards including Enterprise and Investment, Skills Board, a Regeneration Board and the Opportunity Bucks Board. There would be a pooled investment fund to exclusively fund inclusive economic growth.

The Leader made a distinction between economic development and economic regeneration as opposed to housing and that it was important to focus on economic development as a separate issue. Therefore the terms of reference would be amended with reference to the Housing and Regeneration Board to focus on economic regeneration and not housing and regeneration. It was agreed that the Cabinet would delegate to the Leader authority to make minor changes to the terms of reference as required.

During discussion Cabinet Members welcomed the report and that having a single body would champion economic development for Buckinghamshire and promote the County as a great place to invest. A Cabinet Member commented that it was disappointing that no Government funding had been given to Buckinghamshire especially with its pockets of deprivation. Another Cabinet Member welcomed the changes including having one body to ensure no duplication and having good governance in one place to ensure good decision making.

RESOLVED:-

- 1. That the Council will aim to transition to a 'No Deal' partnership model of strategic governance with effect from April 2023, as outlined in Appendix 1, and to establish a 'Pooled Investment Fund' to exclusively fund inclusive economic growth.**
- 2. That a new Place Based Growth Board be established to strengthen alignment, generate and focus funds, and oversee the effective allocation of resources to support agreed principles.**
- 3. That a further 4 Supporting Boards be established reporting into the Growth Board. The Supporting Boards will be responsible for the development and management of a number of strands of supporting work including an Enterprise and Investment Board; a Skills Board; a Place, Housing and Regeneration Board (with amendment referenced above to focus on economic regeneration); and an Opportunity Bucks Board. As above, the Cabinet delegated authority to the Leader to make minor changes to the terms of reference of the Supporting Boards as required.**
- 4. That it be agreed that the Buckinghamshire LEP will fulfil the Enterprise and Investment Board remit. As such, in this initial phase the Council will seek to integrate activity rather than incorporate the legal entity and will not pursue TUPE transfer and the dissolution of the LEP Company.**
- 5. That Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF) will lead on the business support**

and integrated skills programme support whilst maintaining its status as the primary Buckinghamshire business representation organisation. As such, BBF will manage both the Growth Hub and the Skills Hub, subject to the core funders (Buckinghamshire Council and the Buckinghamshire LEP) agreeing a Memorandum of Understanding with BBF, to include agreed metrics, to clarify expectations around the funding provided.

- 6. That the management of the Enterprise Zone programme (currently managed by the EZ Board (in line with the current approved MoU) and the Connected Counties Gainshare income) be transferred into the 'Pooled Investment Fund'. The gainshare from contracts 1 and 2 (as detailed in the Cabinet report) will be managed by the Enterprise and Investment Board who will assess business cases against criteria set by the Place Based Board in order to help catalyse investment linked to agreed priorities.**
- 7. That as a condition of transferring resources into the proposed 'Pooled Investment Fund' the Council will require:**
 - i. A majority on the Place Based Growth Board.**
 - ii. that all 3 Cabinet Members on the Enterprise and Investment Board must agree to the release of any funding from the 'Pooled Investment Fund'.**
 - iii. formal Council approval for any additional funding, in line with financial procedures.**
- 8. That the objectives of place based growth will include:**
 - i. better utilising and aligning existing support services including IT, HR and finance.**
 - ii. improving relationship management with the most significant Buckinghamshire businesses.**
 - iii. increasing the Inward Investment capacity in conjunction with the Department for International Trade (DIT).**
 - iv. maximising external funding and grant bidding capacity.**