

Evaluation of Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership Activities

Project	Description of LEP activity	Comments / impact in West Berkshire
Central Coordination Activity		
TVB LEP Board and Forum	Lead the LEP Board and Forum, providing full secretariat responsibilities. Unitary Authorities are represented by an elected and non-elected (CEO) member, alongside the business, education and third sector representatives	Essential to coordinate LEP activities. The Forum provides oversight of the LEP, and challenges, scrutinises and ratifies decisions made or recommended by the Board. It has the power to ' call in ' decisions if at least 4 Forum members apply to do so. Cr Lynne Doherty represents Berkshire Leaders Group on the Board and Cr Ross Mackinnon represents West Berkshire Council on the Forum.
Berkshire Public Services Network (CEOs)	Attend and participate.	West Berkshire Council is represented by Chief Executive Nigel Lynn.
Place Making Board	The Place Making Board was established to stimulate and support economic growth and raise productivity across Berkshire. It meets 10 times a year and the LEP provides the secretariat function.	West Berkshire Council is represented by Acting Executive Director, Place Eric Owens. A helpful group to discuss and coordinate a range of issues that can be better delivered if looked at across Berkshire and not individually by each authority. A good forum for bringing in relevant partners where helpful. Delivery Partners: Thames Valley Berkshire LEP, the six Unitary Authorities, One Public Estate (OPE) and selected partners.
TVB LEP Workplan	Produce an annual workplan that is signed off by the LEP Board. Quarterly updates reviewed by the LEP Board.	Essential to coordinate LEP activities. A workplan is a requirement for the business-as-usual functioning of any organisation.
Berkshire Recovery and Renewal Plan	Review the RRP implementation plan at least every 6 months and present to the LEP Forum and Place Making Board. Ongoing delivery of LEP items within RRP	The Recovery and Renewal Plan provides a useful strategic overview and repository of economic information for Berkshire as a whole – but there is limited follow up to align policies and actions between Local Authorities.

Programme management	Ongoing monitoring of government funded projects, e.g., Local Growth Fund, Getting Building Fund and European Social Fund projects and reporting to programme groups and government as required.	This is an excellent function of the LEP and means that individual authorities are not needing to report directly. It is also good for picking up on underspend in one area that could be used for another area. The LEP having the overview is really valuable.
Heathrow strategic groups	Attend groups as appropriate, representing Berkshire's interests. Including Heathrow Strategic Planning Group (HSPG) and Western Rail Link to Heathrow (WRLtH) (Currently on hold)	These have not been so critical for West Berkshire but can see the value for other authorities.
Infrastructure and Place		
Berkshire Strategic Transport Forum (BSTF)	<p>Forum for sharing best practice across Berkshire. This forum provides a convening role in making the case for investment in the kind of transport infrastructure needed to support and grow the Berkshire economy</p> <p>LEP prepares papers and agenda for this group, with the formal secretariat function being carried out by Slough Borough Council (as the Accountable Body). Meets at least twice a year.</p>	<p>This has coordinated and delivered some excellent work over a long period of time. It is not only of huge value to the Officers but means that when one of the Delivery Partners is consulting on something or wants to engage with the Transport Authorities, they can do so through this group – saving on time, money and getting a much better outcome from the discussion.</p> <p>This group would not happen if the LEP (or something similar) did not coordinate, prepare agendas, invite speakers and produce notes / follow up on actions. It takes time, effort and knowledge to do this and the LEP have been brilliant at it.</p> <p>Delivery Partners: Six Berkshire Unitary Authorities, Network Rail, Great Western Railway, South Western Railway, Highways England, Reading Buses, Heathrow Airport and Department for Transport (DfT).</p>
Berkshire Local Transport Body (BLTB)	Consists of 6 elected members from Berkshire authorities with LEP appointed private sector members. The work of the BLTB is informed by the BSTF and it oversees the independent scrutiny of decisions made here.	<p>Cr Richard Somner represents the Council on the BLTB, with Cr Tony Vickers as reserve.</p> <p>This has been a necessary and valuable group for deciding on the allocation of funding for transport schemes / projects.</p>

	<p>LEP prepares papers and agenda for this group, with the formal secretariat function being carried out by Slough Borough Council (as the Accountable Body). Meets at least twice a year.</p>	<p>The involvement of private sector members has added a valuable dimension and perspective to the work and the decision making process. The decision to allocate many £millions across Berkshire could not have happened without the formal setting up of this group and the ongoing excellent management of it from the LEP. If there are further funding streams that will be available then this group will continue to have high value and is a model that could be replicated for other subject areas or a group that could widen its remit with other Members (LA and Private) joining it.</p>
Transport for South-East	<p>Contributes alongside neighbouring LEPs to the project to deliver greater and more accessible transport options for Berkshire. The LEP collaborates with stakeholders across the region but does not have a place on the board.</p> <p>LEP attends meetings to promote pan-Berkshire opportunities</p>	<p>The LEP's role with TfSE means that Berkshire's interests can be represented together and because we do this jointly we are only paying for one membership between the 6 authorities. If we were not coordinated in this way (supported by the LEP) we would all have to find a representative and pay the full amount individually (unlikely to be affordable given the current financial climate).</p>
Capital Scheme monitoring	<p>Manage the delivery of the remaining infrastructure capital projects. It will also track and monitor outputs and progress associated with completed projects and report these to relevant boards</p>	<p>This links with Programme Management above. In addition to the comments above being relevant here, this activity provides accountability for the £millions invested in the TVB area.</p>
Berkshire Digital Infrastructure Group (formerly Superfast Berkshire)	<p>Increased broadband coverage across Berkshire to 99.6%, completed Sept 22.</p> <p>Project Gigabit aims to increase speeds to 1GB to 85% of Berkshire by 2025.</p>	<p>The LEP in an informal partner to the DIG Programme and has been key in funding opportunities for Digital Infrastructure. 2 of our current projects are being funded by the MHCLG Getting Building Fund of 1.7M award, one of which is being led by the LEP (LoRaWAN). They are also key in assisting the DIG in defining and implementing our digital strategy.</p>

	LEP prepares papers and agenda, with the formal secretariat function being carried out by West Berkshire Council	West Berkshire has benefited from Full Fibre to schools, LoRaWan winter gritting, 5G small cell deployment in Beenham.
Business Environment		
Business Environment Programme & Delivery Group	LEP provides the secretariat function, meets at least 3 times within the year.	
Thames Valley Berkshire Funding Escalator	LEP manages the contract with the Funding Escalator provider, Finance Southeast, and sit on the Scrutiny Group. The long-term role of this fund is currently under review and may change in agreement with the LEP Board. Provide loan finance and mobilising funds to SMEs with 18 businesses supported in 2022/23	<p>The Funding Escalator was an £11.3m business finance / loan scheme funded and managed by the LEP.</p> <p>It was essential for the LEP to manage this fund and it addressed a gap in provision of accessible finance for high growth businesses.</p>
Berkshire Business Growth Hub	<p>Front door for opportunities for business support in Berkshire. Increase signposting to SMEs to access funding and training with the aim to help 900 businesses by March 2023</p> <p>Expanded with £20k of UKSPF funding from each Berkshire Local Authority to provide new programmes for start-ups and high growth 2023 to 2025.</p>	<p>The LEP's role in providing bespoke advice and guidance to businesses of a range of sizes and levels of establishment fulfils a key gap in provision across Berkshire and we view this as a very valuable function.</p> <p>This could not be replicated within West Berkshire Council, not least because the LEP have a uniquely strong expertise in this area, a level of impartiality, and a broader overview of the economic zone of Berkshire, its constituent industries and challenges.</p> <p>Furthermore by delivering this function across Berkshire the LEP achieve an economy of scale in terms of demand from businesses that could not be met if individual authorities delivered business growth advice exclusive to each district. A total of 41 West Berkshire businesses were referred to the Hub in 2021/22.</p>

Department for International Trade (DIT) enquiries	Responding on behalf of all Berkshire unitary authorities to DIT enquiries regarding sector capability and supporting site/facility enquiries from 3 rd parties. Inward investment for Berkshire currently coordinated by the Chamber of Commerce	This is in theory a valuable and necessary function, in order to ensure that the broad inward investment 'offer' of Berkshire is well aligned. However we have so far gained limited value from this – the Economic Development Team has not been made aware of DIT enquiries responded to by the LEP aside from coordination of a local incentive offer – which was limited.
Business Rates Retention Pilot	LEP managed the delivery of the Business Rates Retention Pilot for Berkshire Authorities	This was a pilot programme that ran from 2018-2019 in West Berkshire. Should other similar programmes emerge in the future then the LEP will have an important role to play to supporting applications for bids and project management.
Catalyst South	Represents the South-East in unlocking its economic power through boosting enterprise and innovation.	Delivery Partners: 6 LEPs (Coast to Capital, Enterprise M3, Hertfordshire, Southeast, Solent and Thames Valley Berkshire).
Employment and Skills		
Careers and Enterprise Company/Berkshire Enterprise Advisor Network	LEP operated the CEC contracts until August 2022. Connects educational establishments with employers supporting 58 schools to be matched with an Enterprise Advisor	CEC is the national body to support schools/colleges to deliver careers education. Very supportive of schools and have done some great work for SEND young people and providing labour market information and the Careers Hub Schools network.
Skills and Advisory Panel and Delivery Group	Provide the secretariat function. Meets at least three times within the year.	<i>"Bring together local employers and skills providers to pool knowledge on skills and labour market needs, and to work together to understand and address key local challenges... Help colleges, universities and other providers deliver the skills required by employers, now and in the future."</i> Vital secretariat work to support this group to fulfil their function. West Berkshire is represented by Newbury College and Mark Browne, School Improvement Team.
Berkshire Opportunities Portal	Gateway to jobs, apprenticeships, and further education for Berkshire residents.	Portal provides a good gateway to opportunities. Impact on West Berkshire is somewhat unknown but Newbury College is a delivery partner and Katharine

		<p>Makant, Economy Manager was on the Steering Group. https://www.berkshireopportunities.co.uk/</p> <p>Delivery Partners: six Unitary Authorities, Careers and Enterprise Company, and the respective college of each area.</p>
Intelligence and Data		
Berkshire Skills Report and Skills Priority Statement	Produced annually	Source of regional economic and skills data.
Business in Berkshire report	Produced annually	Source of regional economic and business data.
Thames Valley Monthly Economic Briefing	Produced monthly	Valuable source of economic data, but not essential.
Industrial Sector Propositions	Review and update at least 2 sector propositions per year providing information on sectors where Berkshire has a competitive advantage. As well as information on innovation spaces and the labour market.	The role played by the LEP in researching and presenting data and insights regarding Berkshire industries and wider economy is useful to help steer local priorities for work.
Annual Berkshire Prospectus	Promotes opportunities for investment in the region as well as areas for collaboration.	Promotes some of the inward investment opportunities, and ways in which West Berkshire is leading/ cutting edge. 2022 Prospectus promotes Newbury Town Centre & LRIE, Grazeley Solar Farm and the Newbury North/South Active Travel route for investment. However we have received little feedback of the impact of this document on potential investors.
Lobbying Central Government	LEP has well established links into Government and Business Networks. Provides good intelligence and advantage to Berkshire for strategic decision making	
Bid support	LEP gives support on infrastructure and economic development funding bids – including UK Shared Prosperity Fund,	The advice from the LEP on our bid for UKSPF was hugely valuable. Through professional connections with individuals in Government departments the LEP has

	Land Release Funds and the Levelling Up Funds	been able to provide very useful insights into the priorities of funding and schemes, including the UKSPF and the now-defunct Investment Zones. This will continue to be valuable when future schemes come forward.
Net Zero Carbon		
Net Zero Task Force As per the Service Level Agreement	Provide secretariat and strategic leadership, which will meet at least four times per year	<p>This is an emerging area of coordination which could play a similarly valuable role as the Berkshire Local Transport Body and Berkshire Strategic Transport Forum currently do for transport.</p> <p>The officer group is already proving hugely useful and will act as a forum for sharing best practice, developing joint work, joining together for funding bids etc. The fact that no officer group or joint Member engagement has been sustained until the LEP started to coordinate demonstrates that the central organisation of this is needed as no one Authority has the capacity to take this on.</p>