

SEBH Steering Group Minutes

Date: 2 April 2020

Part 1

Attendees: Amy Bernardo, Adam Bryan, Chris Burr, Ellie Clow, Emma Culloch, Ioni Sullivan, Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer, Jo Simmons, Jon Birkett, Mark Jones, Ryan Jagpal, Sarah Bell, Susan Berdo, Tudor Price

Apologies: Billy Masters, Dave Hughes, Eloisa Whiteman, Ian Smallwood, Joanne Cable, Lorna Norris, Louise Aitkens, Paul Chapman, Suzanne Bennett

1. Welcome and apologies

1.1 Attendees were welcomed by Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer to the first 'virtual' steering group meeting.

1.2 Apologies were received from Billy Masters, Dave Hughes, Eloisa Whiteman, Ian Smallwood, Joanne Cable, Lorna Norris, Louise Aitkens, Paul Chapman and Suzanne Bennett.

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

2.1 Minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as a true record.

2.2 Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer went through the summary of action points from the previous meeting. The following were noted:

2.2.1 To amend the ToR and to establish whether a Board member/director could join the meetings of the steering group as a business representative.

- ToR have been amended but not added to the SELEP website yet
- Selection of the SME Champion will take place at the next Board meeting – update to be provided **ACTION – Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer**

2.2.2 To give the steering group members an opportunity to contribute items to the agenda in advance of each meeting.

- Request for agenda items was sent out prior to the agenda issue; this will continue in the future

2.2.3 To put together a schedule/document to enable the Growth Hubs to report against the Principles of Funding on regular basis.

- This will be completed in time for the next steering group meeting (21 May 2020)

2.2.4 To draw up a list of Catapults

- Work in progress, delayed due to the current unprecedented situation

2.2.5 To draft a detailed KPI document.

- The document has been drafted, KPIs for the SEBH were combined and submitted to BEIS
- The final version will be shared with the Growth Hubs following the meeting

2.2.6 To keep the steering group up to date on the RFQ process for SEBH evaluation.

- The RFQ was issued on 14 February 2020
- Contract for the evaluation hasn't been awarded

2.2.7 To re-direct the existing Growth Hub website to the new SEBH website by 26 February 2020

- Business East Sussex – completed
- BEST – completed
- KMGH – still to be completed

2.2.8 To share a copy of Mark Jones' presentation with the steering group

- The presentation was shared

2.2.9 To process the core and additional funding payment once the signed Grant Agreements were returned.

- All amended Grant Agreements were returned
- The core funding and the additional funding for advisory provision claim forms were processed and payments made as appropriate

2.2.10 To return Q4 forecast and to notify the Accountable Body of any underspend.

- All Q4 forecasts were returned

2.2.11 To organise a discussion around ERDF Legacy Funding with the appropriate Lead Authorities

- The meeting has taken place

3. Update on SELEP actions since the start of social distancing

- 3.1** Adam Bryan gave an update on where the SELEP was in respect of COVID-19.
- 3.2** He stated that the message to Government was that the LEP had been very proactive in articulating how it connected to its SMEs through the Growth Hub provision.
- 3.3** He mentioned the additional funding for business support delivery and the fact that there could be more resources for delivery of that business support through the Growth Hub project.
- 3.4** Adam Bryan referred to the cancellation of the Investment Panel and using the date for the strategic Board meeting instead.
- 3.5** He stated that the substantive agenda item at the Strategic Board meeting would be around COVID-19 and how the LEP funding could be re-directed into SMEs support.

4. Communication with Government – co-ordinated two-way messaging and intelligence

- 4.1** Adam Bryan referred to the Business Impact Survey and how successful it was. He advised that the responses were being pulled together and a communication to the business community was going out tomorrow, 3rd April.
- 4.2** He also mentioned the weekly intelligence returns which were now even more important than ever and certainly a very valuable source of information for the Government.
- 4.3** He articulated that LEPs were in a much better place with Government than previously and were being used to circulate key messages. He also added that the Government might use SELEP and its Growth Hub to seek its view on certain matters/topics therefore a coordinated approach to such intelligence was very important.
- 4.4** Furthermore, he added that the Chair, Christian Brodie, was a director on the LEP Network Ltd which strengthened SELEP's position considerably.
- 4.5** Adam Bryan took questions from the Growth Hubs.

- BEST Growth Hub - instead of reacting to the current situation we should be looking into the future and what support we should be providing to SMEs.
- Kent County Council (KCC) - Sue Berdo outlined the support KCC was looking into providing to businesses directly through repurposing their own funds.
- Kent & Medway Growth Hub – Tudor Price referred to the COVID-19 Business Support Hotline that had been in place for the last 6 days and the difficult conversations that were taking place each day. He said that when analysing what support should be put in place, we had to keep in mind that some businesses would not survive. In other words, we had to have a clear and realistic view of the delivery going forward.
- Business East Sussex – Ioni Sullivan advised that they were managing the response through the local steering group and LEP structure. She was happy to feed business information directly to SELEP unless there was another alternative route. She also spoke about potential expansion of Growth Hub in order to provide more support to the local SMEs. She raised a question around the additional £10 million funding to which Adam Bryan replied by explaining that the LEP had not had the final information from BEIS yet.
- Additionally, Chris Burr asked a question around the SME Champion and how this was going to be imbedded in the work of the Board.

5. COVID-19 – support for businesses

5.1 Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer opened a group discussion. The points for discussion were as follows:

- What is your Growth Hub is doing?
- What are the emerging gaps in the provision?
- How can we better co-ordinate the support already on offer?
- What do the navigators/advisers need to deliver the day to day support?
- Is there anything SELEP can help with?

5.2 Business East Sussex prospective - business as usual, volume of calls up, the team is taking the calls and feeding them to correct district, person and/or service, triage is taking place through an email and all initial enquiries are being dealt with swiftly. The Growth Hub is using the Business Support Helpline (BSH) scripts which are very helpful. Additionally, the East Sussex County Council (ESCC) is looking into reallocating displaced staff that may be able to help with delivery of business support.

Emerging issues - furloughing, the scheme is not open yet, which is causing a lot of consternation; fishing and farming not being eligible for any support.

Regarding SELEP's help, Ioni Sullivan asked that business intelligence was fed to Government as frequently as possible as businesses wanted to tell their story.

- 5.2** Kent & Medway Growth Hub prospective – Kent County Council (KCC) together with districts have set up a dedicated support help line delivered under the umbrella of the Growth Hub project. The helpline is open daily between 8:30am and 5:00pm. The Growth Hub has also repurposed its Live Chat and introduced COVID-19 form/questionnaire. KCC has also set up a helpline for vulnerable people which is separate from that for businesses. Additionally, KCC has introduced a repayment free period to its loan scheme which has been received well by businesses.

Emerging issues - directors paying themselves dividends don't get anything; CBILs are difficult to obtain; overdrafts are very popular, but banks are charging a high interest rate; bullying landlords.

Next steps – we need to look into steps to help the economy to get back on its feet.

- 5.3** BEST Growth Hub perspective – allocated specialist areas to key team members, close working relationship with the Essex County Council (ECC), acting as a conduit between local districts and the ECC, the Partnership Co-ordinator is the central point for all information, updates are issued to key partners on daily basis and the team is gathering intelligence and mapping the economic position.

Emerging issues - utilities companies being unreasonable; credit rating impact; banks not being particularly supportive; some businesses don't want the full amount of the loan but there is no mechanism to obtain lesser amount; clarity on key workers is required; more information on furloughing is needed.

Next steps - working on intelligence gathering and research area; putting together a programme highlighting that we are open for business in Essex which will focus on survival and negating the unprecedented situation.

- 5.4** Feedback from ERDF projects – details on how projects can adapt should be shared with Jo Simmons who is preparing a consolidated feedback from SELEP to the MHCLG. Chris Burr advised that a copy of the feedback gathered so far would be shared with Jo Simmons following the meeting.

6. Monitoring and evaluation

Progress against Schedule 3 (2019-20) – BEIS end of year review

6.1 Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer reported the following:

- The completion of the Growth Hub Annual Review has been postponed
- The new date for returning of reports is Tuesday 30 June 2020
- The above date also applies to the £31k advisor uplift funding and the auditor's report
- The EU Exit Readiness and Intelligence will be reported by the Cluster Lead – Growth Hubs will be required to contribute to this report
- The template for reporting on the £31k advisor uplift funding has already been shared with the Lead Authorities (the current deadline for returns remains Monday 4 May 2020)
- SELEP is seeking external support in order to complete the Growth Hub Annual Review template

Annual Evaluation of the SEBH

6.2 Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer advised that the annual evaluation of the Growth Hub project as a whole would not take place this year.

6.3 The evaluation has been cancelled due to the current unprecedented situation. Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer confirmed that she doubled checked the statutory requirements and the annual evaluation was not one of them.

6.4 As advised earlier, she confirmed that she would be sharing further information around the Growth Hub Annual Report in the coming days. **ACTION – Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer**

7. CRM – progress update

7.1 Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer advised that the current CRM system has been tested and the outputs for all three Growth Hubs now add up to the aggregated figures in the SELEP CRM.

7.2 She also informed the steering group that the data transfer, up to 31 March 2020, for Kent & Medway Growth Hub still needed to be completed. Similarly, Business East Sussex had to complete additional data entries following the move of the hub to the ESCC.

7.3 As of 1 April 2020, both Business East Sussex and Kent & Medway Growth Hub would be using the Evolutive CRM system. Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer advised that both hubs have been provided with a training on the system.

7.4 Moreover, Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer said that SELEP was in the process of designing the Evolutive dashboard in an attempt to visualise some of the data. The dashboard will cover geographical and sector splits, enquiry status breakdown, referral volumes, and business stage summaries. There was also a plan to have a specific KPI dashboard so that KPI targets and attainment could be easily visualised.

7.5 Regarding COVID-19 form/questionnaire, Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer informed the hubs that the form was available in their CRM system and ready for use.

8. Website – progress update

8.1 Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer and Ellie Clow provided an update on the new website. It was noted that Business East Sussex and BEST Growth Hub have moved over to the new website.

8.2 Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer advised that the new website was being referred to in all newsletters, social media posts and communications with partners.

8.3 It was noted that the accessibility updates would be completed within the next two weeks in order to ensure compliance.

8.4 Additionally, the steering group was informed that the partner functions in Events and Find a Desk have been added to the website and the *find local business support* page has been added to the Kent & Medway Growth Hub geographical site. Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer confirmed that both Business East Sussex and BEST Growth Hub could also benefit from this additional function should they desired.

8.5 Regarding analytics, it was reported that the hubs need to provide a google email address in order to be added to the system. Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer reiterated that SELEP doesn't have the capacity to monitor each individual site and/or provide data to the hubs which can be easily accessed by them on individual basis.

8.6 Ellie Clow advised that even though Pillory Barn were working their way through various bugs and fixes, everyone should be aware that certain website functions would not work in Internet Explorer and therefore may not be possible for them to be fixed.

8.7 Tudor Price asked whether it was possible to send suggestion regarding some of the pages for general consideration. Both Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer and Ellie Clow said that they were happy to receive further feedback.

8.8 Moreover, Tudor Price confirmed that currently there were no new events to be added to website however when for example webinars became available, he

would populate these as appropriate. He also explained that the hub was sharing all information with the business community via newsletter and therefore news pieces were not necessarily their priority.

- 8.9** Regarding the re-direction of the old Kent & Medway Growth Hub website to the new SEBH website, Tudor Price advised that the redirection would take place as soon as the crisis died down a little, most probably early next week. **ACTION – Tudor Price**

9. EU Exit support programme – evaluation

- 9.1** Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer provided an update on the Ready2020 campaign that came to the end on 31 March 2020.

- 9.2** She informed the steering group that the final evaluation of the campaign took place on 11 March 2020 and the report was shared with the hubs.

- 9.3** She also advised that Grayling provided a short ideas document on how the Ready2020 campaign could possibly be extended/utilised to provide support and guidance to SMEs during COVID-19. The current microsite remained in place, but a message was added explaining that the campaign had come to the end and redirected businesses to COVID-19 pages on the new SEBH website.

- 9.4** Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer asked the hubs whether they were able to run all events prior to 31 March 2020. In reply the following was stated:

BEST Growth Hub – a number of events had to be put back due to very low attendance, these events would be reformatted and run in the future

Kent & Medway Growth Hub – all event bar one run, feedback received was good however towards the end the numbers were low

Business East Sussex – some of the events were converted into shorter webinars, they all went well and the last one aimed at women in business was oversubscribed

- 9.10** Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer thanked everyone for participation in the steering group meeting and moved to Part 2 with Lead Authorities representatives only.

Part 2

Attendees: Ioni Sullivan, Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer, Susan Berdo, Amy Bernardo, Jon Birkett

Apologies: Suzanne Bennett, Chris Burr, Lorna Norris

8. Grant Offer letter 2020-21 - update

8.1 Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer and Amy Berdo provided a quick update on the Grant Offer Letter 2020-21. It was stated that following submission of additional information to BEIS which included the KPI document there has been no further communication received.

9. EU Exit support funding - update

9.1 Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer informed the Lead Authorities that even though the Grant Agreement (tranche 2) had been signed and returned no funding had been received by the Accountable Body yet.

9.2 Amy Berdo clarified that a confirmation of funding transfer had been confirmed however the funds were not due to be received until late April 2020. The funding would be paid to each Lead Authority as soon as it cleared in the Accountable Body account.

10. AOB

10.1 As there was no AOB the meeting was brought to a close.

Meeting closed at 4:00pm

Summary of Action Points

- 2.2.1 To provide an update on SME Champion – **Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer**
- 6.4 To share further information on the Growth Hub Annual Report – **Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer**
- 8.9 To redirect the old Kent & Medway Growth Hub website to the South East Business Hub website – **Tudor Price**