c

**SELEP Rural Sector Working Group (RSWG)**

#### Monday May 11th 2020

#### 11:00-12:00

Microsoft Teams – Video Conference

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Welcome and introductions – Graham Peters (Chair)**

Chair thanked the group for calling in to the meeting.

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

1. **Buy Local South East – Sector Support Fund Bid – Floortje Hoette**

Floortje Hoette provided a presentation to the working group on the submitted Sector Support Fund bid, ‘Buy Local South East’ – slides to be sent out separately with the meeting notes.

The project focuses on advocacy and promotion of the region’s food and drink sector. It aims to create a regional website and portal, aimed at both consumers and businesses. As well as creating a database for food and drink businesses in the SELEP area.

1. **Updates/ Open Form on Rural Economy Issues – ALL**

Dierdre Wells noted that aligning the experience project and local tourism are important in the post Covid-19 landscape. There have also been initial discussions with Visit England to pivot the Gourmet Garden Trails project towards the domestic market.

More information will be shared soon on potential next steps and Dierdre will present an item on the Visit Local agenda at the next meeting of the Rural Working Group.

Michael Valenzia updated the group on the messages coming out from the CLA. Also noting the importance of accurate messaging before people travel anywhere – e.g. check before you travel guidance. A CLA update will be shared with the group and sent out separately with the meeting notes.

Mario Caccamo informed that group that NIAB EMR were successful in their Strength in Places Fund bid – ‘Growing Kent and Medway’. This is welcome news that will bring substantial investment to the SELEP region for a number of years – further information on the bid will be shared with the group in due course, and at the next meeting in June.

Alex Riley noted that SELEP is focussing on economic intelligence relating to the SELEP economy at-large and the potential impact of Covid-19. As such SELEP cannot commit immediate resources to a separate piece of evidence work for what will replace the existing Rural Strategy. But any pertinent information relating to the rural economy that emanates from the work currently being undertaken by SELEP will be brought to the group and potentially utilised.

Brian Horton informed the group that the three developer groups in SELEP have sent a joint letter to Homes England and MHCLG which sets out the key asks for the housing and development sector in the region – this will be sent out separately with the meeting notes.

1. **AOB – future meeting**

Chair thanked the working group members for attending the call.

It was agreed that another similar short meeting of the working group should be held in June – a confirmed date and invitation will be sent out in due course.