

Minutes of Strategic Board: 18th March 2022

Attendees

Chris Brodie	Chair
Sarah Dance	Deputy Chair
Adam Bryan	CEO
Ana Christie	Team East Sussex
Angela O'Donoghue	Further Education Representative
Claire Lewis	Success Essex
Clive Soper	Team East Sussex
Cllr Graham Butland	Essex District/Borough/City Councils representative
Cllr Lesley Wagland	Essex County Council
Cllr Rodney Chambers	Medway Council
Cllr Roger Gough	Kent County Council
Cllr Ron Woodley	Southend Borough Council
Cllr Rupert Simmons	East Sussex County Council
David Rayner	Success Essex (non-voting)
Graham Peters	Team East Sussex
Jo James	Kent and Medway Economic Partnership
Liz Gibney	Kent and Medway Economic Partnership
Mark Curle	Opportunity South Essex
Matthew Arnold	Kent and Medway Economic Partnership
Miles Adcock	Success Essex
Penny Shimmin	Social Enterprise Representative
Prof Karen Cox	Higher Education Representative

Apologies: Aideen Sadler, Carol Ford, Cllr Keith Glazier (substituted by Cllr Rupert Simmons), Cllr Kevin Bentley (substituted by Cllr Lesley Wagland), Cllr Mark Coxshall, Perry Glading (substituted by Mark Curle).

Other attendees:

Alex Riley	SELEP Secretariat	Jo Simmons	SELEP Secretariat
Amy Bernardo	Essex County Council	Lorna Norris	Essex County Council
Amy Ferraro	SELEP Secretariat	Louise Aitken	SELEP Secretariat
Carole Barron	University of Kent	Michael Neumann	Essex County Council
Dave Evans	East Sussex County Council	Paul Chapman	Essex County Council
Ellie Clow	SELEP Secretariat	Richard Dawson	East Sussex County Council
Emma Lindsell	Southend Borough Council	Sarah Nurden	KMEP
Geoff Miles	Kent Ambassadors	Sharon Spicer	SELEP Secretariat
Helen Dyer	SELEP Secretariat	Stephanie Ennis	Essex Legal Services
Helen Russell	SELEP Secretariat	Sunny Ee	Medway Council
Howard Davies	SELEP Secretariat	Vivien Prigg	SELEP Secretariat
Ian Lewis	Opportunity South Essex	Zoe Gordon	SELEP Secretariat
Iwona Bainbridge	SELEP Secretariat		

This meeting was held as a video conference and a recording can be found [by clicking here](#); the timestamp of the start of the discussion for each item is indicated in brackets.

Item 1: Welcome and introduction

1.1. Chris Brodie welcomed the Board to the meeting and asked members to introduce themselves individually.

Item 2: Minutes of last meeting, declarations of interest, matters arising (6'22" timestamp on video)

2.1. The Board agreed the minutes of the last meeting as an accurate record pending the following amendment:

i) 2.4 should read "Hailsham and District Bid Ltd." instead of "Aylesham and District Bid Ltd."

2.2. The following interests were declared:

i) Jo James declared an interest in relation to item 7 as Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce delivers the Kent and Medway Growth Hub.

ii) Sarah Dance declared an interest as the Co-Chair of the South East Creative Economy Network, who are requesting a project change under item 6.

2.3. Adam Bryan provided an update regarding Freeport East and Thames Freeport. A formal update regarding Freeport East will be circulated to the Board.

2.4. Adam Bryan informed the Board that the Government's Cities and Local Growth Unit is undertaking a Deep Dive of East Sussex projects where the delivery partner is Sea Change Sussex. This is being undertaken in accordance with the National Assurance Framework.

2.5. SELEP and Essex County Council have been in receipt of a number of FOI requests and formal complaints regarding East Sussex projects which are being delivered by Sea Change Sussex, all of which are being handled in accordance with the requirements of our Assurance Framework.

2.6. The Board has received the following public question:

"Councillor Kevin Dixon, the Rother District Council representative on the SeaChange board, has resigned from the board, citing the 'reputational risk' to both himself and the council of continued association with SeaChange. He went on to criticise the slow progress of multiple SeaChange projects and said that, "The reality is that SeaChange is in constant conflict with all three authorities and the regeneration aims and objectives of all parties are severely compromised as a result".

"Rother Council voted unanimously not to nominate another councillor to sit on the SeaChange board "until such time as that person is able to represent the best interests of the company without compromising the values of the council." The Hastings Borough Council representative on the board has suggested (HBC Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 8 March) that he may well take the same step as Cllr Dixon.

"Given these very serious criticisms, and the numerous delays and significant cost overruns of almost every single SeaChange project funded by SELEP, I would like to know what due diligence SELEP has carried out on SeaChange in the past to ensure itself it is a proper recipient of public money, before awarding funding."

The response is:

SELEP and Essex County Council have not contracted directly with Sea Change Sussex. There is a Service Level Agreement in place between SELEP/Essex County Council as the Accountable Body and East Sussex County Council.

East Sussex County Council have confirmed that the agreement between Sea Change Sussex and East Sussex County Council sets out the relevant rights and obligations imposed on East Sussex County Council under the terms of the Service Level Agreement.

East Sussex County Council have their own governance processes in relation to third-party contracts, and have confirmed that they have undertaken all required due diligence.

- 2.7. Chris Brodie extended his thanks to Angela O'Donoghue, Miles Adcock, Ron Woodley and Claire Lewis for their valuable contributions during their time on the Board.

Item 3: Assurance Framework Updates and New Directors (18'37")

- 3.1. Adam Bryan presented to the Board.
- 3.2. The Board agreed the changes to the Assurance Framework.
- 3.3. The Board resolved to enter into the Power of Attorney for a period of 12 months.
- 3.4. The Board approved the filing of the Confirmation Statement to the Registrar of Companies.
- 3.5. The Board noted the appointment/reappointment of:
- i) Claire Lewis and Miles Adcock as Directors representing Success Essex for a period of 12 months from 1st March 2022, and David Raynor as a representative on an interim basis from 1st April 2022;
 - ii) Ana Christie, Clive Soper and Graham Peters as Directors representing Team East Sussex for a period of 12 months from 1st March 2022;
 - iii) Perry Glading and Aideen Sadler as Directors representing Opportunity South Essex for a period of 12 months from 1st March 2022; and
 - iv) Liz Gibney, Carol Ford, Matthew Arnold, Jo James and Vince Lucas as Directors representing the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership for a period of 12 months from 1st March 2022.
- 3.6. The Board noted the upcoming resignation of Claire Lewis (date to be confirmed) and Miles Adcock (effective 31st March).
- 3.7. The Board noted the latest log of decisions made under the SELEP Ltd Power of Attorney.

Item 4: Levelling Up and SELEP (28'00")

- 4.1. Chris Brodie provided an update to the Board regarding the Levelling Up White Paper and the detailed letter that is expected imminently.
- 4.2. Adam Bryan provided an update to the Board regarding the Adjournment Debate regarding the future of LEPs.
- 4.3. The Board noted the impact of Government's Levelling Up White Paper on SELEP and the ongoing work to ensure that it remains fit for purpose in filling the policy space that has been created for it.
- 4.4. The Board noted the current funding situation affecting the LEP and the operations of the Growth Hub across its three delivery arms.
- 4.5. The Board agreed to not make any new Sector Support Fund awards, noting the challenges associated with completing projects before March 2023 and the opportunity to use that remaining funding to undertake work of strategic added value and central to the LEP's delivery plan for 2022/23 such as activities to support the housing and development agenda, including the function of the SELEP Housing and Development Group, and work to continue activities in view of Government and business such as the Skills Advisory Panel and the Major Projects Group's activities around skills.
- 4.6. The Board agreed to adopt the first quarter activities of the Delivery Plan. A revised version of the document will be brought to the Board when more is known around the future role of LEPs.

Item 5: Capital Programme Update (52'00")

- 5.1. Helen Dyer presented to the Board.
- 5.2. The Board agreed LGF spend beyond 30 September 2021 for the Bexhill Creative Workspace project – completed January 2022.
- 5.3. The Board agreed GBF spend beyond 31 March 2022 for the following seven projects, noting that the Accountability Board had agreed extensions of up to 6 months for all the projects other than Techfort which was granted an extension of up to 9 months:
 - i) Tendring Bikes and Cycle Infrastructure – expected completion September 2022
 - ii) Laindon Place – expected completion of GBF elements September 2022
 - iii) Discovery Park Incubator – expected completion August 2022
 - iv) Romney Marsh Employment Hub – expected completion May 2022
 - v) ASELA LFFN – expected completion April 2022
 - vi) Seven Sisters Country Park Visitor Infrastructure Uplift – expected completion September 2022
 - vii) Techfort – expected completion by December 2022
- 5.4. It was noted that a review of the deliverability of all projects which had received approval for GBF spend beyond March 2022 would be conducted in advance of the next Accountability Board meeting. The outcome of this review will be reflected in the Capital Programme Update report provided at the next Board meeting, allowing an interim review of the projects to be undertaken by the Board.

Item 6: Sector Support Fund Update (1h5'33")

- 6.1. Helen Dyer presented to the Board
- 6.2. The Board endorsed the change request to extend the delivery timetable end date for the SELEP Creative Open Workspace Master Plan and Prospectus project from March 2022 to September 2022.

Item 7: Growth Hub Update (1h08'00")

- 7.1. Jo Simmons presented to the Board.
- 7.2. The Board noted that action is now underway in SELEP and Area Growth Hub Lead Authorities to mitigate the delay in confirmation from Government of Growth Hub core funding for 2022/23 and to help manage the risk of a break in Growth Hub service from 1st April 2022.
- 7.3. The Board agreed to the repurposing of up to £232,797 of ERDF Legacy Funding, previously awarded to Kent County Council for the delivery of a Recover, Pivot and Scale-up business support programme, to cover all or part of core Growth Hub service costs in 2022/23, should the need arise.

Item 8: COVID-19 Recovery Funds Update (1h24'30")

- 8.1. Jo Simmons presented to the Board.
- 8.2. The Board noted the updated to the delivery of the COVID-19 Recovery Funds, including modifications to the KPI targets.

Item 9: AOB & Close (1h35'56")

- 9.1. Chris Brodie closed the meeting.