



SOUTH EAST BUSINESS HUB

Minutes of the South East Business Hub Steering Group held on Monday 6 September 2021

Attendees:	Amy Bernardo	Essex County Council/Accountable Body
	Brian Smith	BEST Growth Hub
	Ellie Clow	South East LEP
	Emma McCulloch	Thurrock Council
	Ian Smallwood	Business East Sussex Growth Hub
	Ioni Sullivan	Business East Sussex Growth Hub
	Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer	South East LEP
	James Wilkinson	South East LEP
	Jo Simmons	South East LEP
	Julian Gibbs	Anglian Ruskin University (U9)
	Kane Tudor	East Sussex County Council
	Louise Aitken	South East LEP
	Mark Jones	South East LEP
	Paul Chapman	Essex County Council
	Rachel Evans	East Sussex County Council
	Tudor Price	Kent & Medway Growth Hub
	Zoe Gordon	South East LEP

1. Welcome and apologies

The attendees were welcomed to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Emma Lindsell, Lorna Norris, Sue Berdo, and Suzanne Bennet.

Following the BEST Growth Hub Manager departure, Brian Smith was welcomed to the meeting and offered an opportunity to introduce himself and provide a short update on the Growth Hub staffing structure changes. It was noted that Brian Smith was asked to step into the Growth Hub Manager's role for the remaining funding period to bring about some stability and continuity of the service.

Furthermore, Tudor Price was invited to provide a short update on the Growth Hub service in the Kent and Medway area following the recent procurement exercise. It was noted that Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce (KICC) won the contract for the Growth Hub delivery. Tudor Price advised the steering group members that the Growth Hub would be providing an enhanced support to the businesses which would entail 36h of one-to-one support over 12-month period. The enhanced facility would aim to support businesses trying to recover from the recent Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Approval of the minutes and matters arising

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 June 2021 were approved by the steering group members as a true record.

The action points arising from the meeting of 7 June 2021 were cleared and noted below:

- A copy of the EBS Consulting presentation and the Growth Hub Annual Evaluation Report had been shared the steering group members.
- LOCASE and the Clean Growth South East would be invited to a future steering group meeting. An update on Net Zero agenda was covered under Comms update (Item 4).

3. Terms of Reference

The terms of reference for the steering group were reviewed by the members. The following points were noted as a result of the conversation:

- Was there a definition for delegated thresholds for contracting authorities and SELEP under decision making especially that the steering group itself didn't hold any mandate in decision making?

Action: *Take away and check the meaning behind the delegated thresholds and update the ToR as appropriate.*

- Part A and Part B should be removed under 'operations' as it was previously agreed that financial monitoring of the Growth Hub project would be undertaken separately with the contracting authorities only.

Action: *To remove Part A and Part B split of the agenda under meetings organisation from the ToR.*

- Change in Essex County Council representative as Paul Chapman's role changed in the last few months.

Action: *To seek a new representative for Essex County Council – Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer to exchange emails with Paul Chapman.*

- Investigate and establish who the new representative for Medway Council should be.

Action: *Jo Simmons to provide a name of the new contact within the Medway Council in order for Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer to seek a new representative.*

- What support was offered to the U9 representative by the U9 working group and should this be addressed locally?

Action: *A separate discussion to take place with Julian Gibbs outside of the steering group meeting.*

- Should the local steering groups be learning from each other and report to the SEBH steering group in order to make the interphase with the Growth Hub Cluster members stronger?

Action: Individual Growth Hubs to consider whether it was beneficial for them to attend each other's steering group meetings.

- Should the Clean Growth Working Group be invited to the SEBH steering group meeting in order to inform the net zero/clean growth agenda?

Action: Jo Simmons to invite a member of the Clean Growth Working Group to the SEBH steering group meeting.

- What was the role of SME Champion, and should they be joining the meetings of the steering group?

Action: To amend the ToR to reflect the fact that the SME Champion(s) (joined role) had been appointed.

Furthermore, the steering group members were advised that the communication channels with the SME Champion(s) would probably be strengthened following the LEP Review and agreed once the Growth Hub delivery model has evolved.

4. Communications

Zoe Gordon brought to everyone's attention that the SEBH Comms Group had been meeting on regular basis and been used as the main forum for bringing relevant information to the Growth Hubs' attention and to work through necessary updates for the website.

The Growth Hubs' representatives were reminded of the importance of the SEBH Comms Group meetings and asked to ensure that each hub was appropriately represented.

Moreover, the steering group members were informed that SELEP had been heavily engaged in supporting the #ZeroCarbonTour which visited Braintree in Essex and Canterbury in Kent.

It was noted that the electric bus was at the GRIDSERVE Electric Forecourt in Braintree on 1 September 2021 and at the University of Kent campus in Canterbury on 2 September 2021. The aim of the #ZeroCarbonTour was for the sustainable electric bus to visit various sites around the country and encourage businesses to sign up and commit to the aims of COP26. This opportunity was further enhanced by the re-launch of the LOCASE ERDF scheme which had been very successful in the South East and was further expanding to Coast2Capital, Enterprise M3 and Solent LEP areas.

It was also noted that SELEP was in the process of organising a Clean Growth-related event which was going to take place prior to the SELEP's AGM on 3 November 2021. Zoe Gordon advised that further details about the event would be shared with the Growth Hubs, steering group members and other partners in due course.

Furthermore, the steering group members were advised that messaging around various capital projects was still taking place and the next MPs Round Table meeting was planned for 23 September 2021.

Around LEP Review, Zoe Gordon mentioned the national messaging was being undertaken by the LEP Network and asked the steering group meeting for their support in this area.

Lastly, Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer brought the steering group attention a Net Zero Engagement Survey issued by BEIS. The ask was for the Growth Hubs or their parent LEP to complete the survey in order for BEIS to better understand the extent to which Growth Hubs and LEPs were engaged with net zero activities, whether national or local. A question was raised whether the survey referred to business activities only or whether the Growth Hubs were to report on wider net zero activities taking place in their area.

It was agreed that Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer would take this as an action point and clarify the ask with BEIS.

Action: *To clarify the purpose of the survey and what activities was BEIS interested in.*

Zoe Gordon offered to share a copy of the briefing note prepared by SELEP to include with the survey return.

5. Annual Evaluation of the Growth Hub

The annual evaluation of the Growth Hub as a whole had been completed and a copy of the report shared with the steering group members and the individual Growth Hubs.

The steering group went through the recommendations as listed in the report.

Following a discussion and taking into account the steering group members' comments around the recommendations it was agreed that a summary of comments and next steps would be put together.

Action: *To put together a summary of comments and next steps arising from the recommendations listed in the annual evaluation report.*

6. CRM and Intelligence gathering

It was reported that the Growth Hubs were using an updated reporting template for the purpose of intelligence gathering. The implementation of the new reporting template went well resulting in the data reported to BEIS being much richer and a lot more useful.

Mark Jones reported on his exploratory research around Growth Hubs' CRM systems. It was noted that 44 Growth Hubs nationally had been contacted and approximately 25 responses received with several conversations taking place already.

The steering group members were informed that changing/selecting of a CRM system would be a significant undertaking hence the need for Growth Hubs involvement. Mark Jones advised that he had already looked at a couple of products that were worth exploring further. One being Exemplas Connect and the other Suits CRM.

It was noted that the Growth Hubs representatives would be invited to a demo presentation on both products with a date being arranged for Exemplas Connect in the coming days.

7. Funding update

- a) FY2021-22 Core Growth Hub Funding – on target, Q2 actuals reporting due in October 2021
- b) Peer Networks Programme 2.0 – no claims at present

8. SELEP COVID-19 Business Support Fund

It was reported that the delivery of the Covid-19 Business Support Fund projects was going well.

WSX the delivery partner for Staring and Succeeding in Business and Adapting with Digital had already put their business support part of the programme in place and were looking to launch a grant application in the latter part of October 2021.

The Revi-VE South East Visitor Economy Fund had its grant application window opened in July 2021 and received approximately 330 applications of which 130 were placed on a waiting list. Despite the grants being 100% there was a high drop out meaning the waiting list had already been exhausted and the programme might have to re-open again.

It was also noted that 12 applications had been processed and the grants paid out to businesses.

Jo Simmons informed the steering group members that the Element 2 of the programme had begun already, and the place-based networks and campaigns should be in place and ready for a launch in early 2022.

9. Growth Hub Delivery Model

It was noted that the Growth Hub delivery model was now intrinsically linked to the LEP Review which had not moved at the pace that was originally envisaged.

It was also noted that the LEP Review was closely linked to the publication of the Levelling Up White Paper which was due in November 2021 meaning that no progress could be made on the Growth Hub delivery model until the outcome of the LEP review and the publication of the White Paper.

Jo Simmons advised that an information update on the Growth Hub delivery model would be provided to the SELEP Strategic Board members in October 2021 which would include the outcomes of the recent survey conducted with the Federated Boards.

10. Growth Hub Website Optimisation

It was noted that this project would be initiated in Q3. The steering group would be provided with an updated in due course.

11. Cluster and BEIS Working Groups Update

Due to time restrictions, the steering group members were advised that a written update would be provided outside of the meeting.

Action: *To provide a written update on the Cluster and BEIS working groups.*

12. Skills update

Louise Aitken, SELEP Skills Lead, provided a short update on the current skills programmes. These included the Digital Bridge, supporting people with basic digital skills, kit and connectivity, the Digital Skills Programme, training people for tech jobs and the Covid-19 Recovery Academy, supporting people into key sectors.

She also brought to the steering group members attention the forthcoming South East Careers event taking place on 19th and 21st October 2021 which would be supported by an accompanying magazine providing spotlight on sectors and careers support.

Moreover, the steering group was advised that two Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) were approved in the SELEP area – Kent & Medway LSIP and Sussex LSIP.

Jim Wilkinson advised that the National Data Strategy Team was putting in place round table discussions with SMEs around data skills gaps and was keen on engaging with local SMEs. Jim Wilkinson offered to share further information as and when became available.

13. Future Meetings

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled for 6 December 2021 at 10am and would take place via MS Teams.

14. Any Other Business

There was no AOB to discuss.

The steering group meeting closed at 12:00pm.

Action points arising from the steering group meeting – summary

Minute	Action	Completed by
Minute 3	Take away and check the meaning behind the delegated thresholds and update the ToR as appropriate.	Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer
Minute 3	To remove Part A and Part B split of the agenda under meetings organisation from the ToR.	Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer
Minute 3	To seek a new representative for Essex County Council – Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer to exchange emails with Paul Chapman.	Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer
Minute 3	Jo Simmons to provide a name of the new contact within the Medway Council in order for Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer to seek a new representative.	Jo Simmons/ Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer
Minute 3	To amend the ToR to reflect the fact that the SME Champion(s) (joined role) had been appointed.	Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer
Minute 4	To clarify the purpose of the survey and what activities was BEIS interested in.	Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer
Minute 5	To put together a summary of comments and next steps arising from the recommendations listed in the annual evaluation report.	Jo Simmons/ Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer
Minute 11	To provide a written update on the Cluster and BEIS working groups.	Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer