



## SOUTH EAST BUSINESS HUB

### Minutes of the South East Business Hub Steering Group held on Tuesday 14 December 2021

<b>Attendees:</b>	Amy Bernardo	Essex County Council/Accountable Body
	Brian Smith	BEST Growth Hub
	Chris Seamark	Kent County Council
	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
	Kazadi Mwamba	Essex County Council
	Mark Jones	South East LEP
	Rachel Evans	East Sussex County Council
	Saliha Cinar	Medway Council
	Susan Berdo	Kent County Council
	Suzanne Bennett	South East LEP
	Tudor Price	Kent & Medway Growth Hub

#### 1. Welcome and apologies

The attendees were welcomed to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Emma Lindsell, Lorna Norris, Louise Aitken, and Zoe Gordon.

Short introductions took place to welcome new members to the meeting: Chris Seamark, Kazadi Mwamba and Saliha Cinar. It was noted that Saliha Cinar would share her role on the steering group with Sean Atkinson-Henry, both representing Medway Council.

#### 2. Approval of the minutes and matters arising

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 6 September 2021 were approved by the steering group members as a true record.

The action points arising from the meeting of 6 September 2021 were cleared and noted below:

- The ToR for the steering group had been amended and uploaded to the SELEP website. It was also clarified that the '*delegated thresholds*' referred to the delegated budget allocated to each Lead Authority for the Growth Hub project as per Schedule 1 of the Growth Hub Grant Offer letter
- The representatives for Essex County Council and Medway Council had been sought and were in attendance

- Discussion around linking the SEBH Steering Group with U9 Working Group would take place in the new year
- Growth Hubs were free to put their own arrangements in place for attending each other's local steering group meetings
- Chris Seamark as a representative for Clean Growth was in attendance
- BEIS Net Zero survey position had been clarified, the survey was completed and submitted to BEIS. The *draft* executive summary had been produced by BEIS and shared with the hubs
- The summary of comments and next steps from the recommendations listed in the annual evaluation report had been put together, shared with the SELEP Strategic Board and individual Growth Hub Steering Groups

### 3. LEP Review Update

Suzanne Bennett provided an update in relation to the LEP Review. It was noted that the latest LEP review was more about evaluation of the growth policy across the country rather than the LEPs' performance. The purpose of the review was to look at various streams and strands of LEPs' work in order to provide a comprehensive report before the summer recess. Unfortunately, the original report had not materialised and currently the LEP Review had been linked to the publication of the Levelling Up White Paper (LUWP).

The steering group was made aware that the Government officials would not commit to a date for publication of the LUWP despite some rumours suggesting it might be 6 January 2022.

Furthermore, Suzanne Bennett advised the steering group of the recent SELEP Secretariat consultation and the forthcoming reduction in team resources by approximately 45% due to the uncertainty around future funding.

It was noted that the lack of clarity around LEPs was also having an adverse impact on Growth Hubs' future. The steering group was advised that there was still no information on Growth Hub funding beyond 31 March 2022.

A question was raised around contingency planning and possibility of partners' contribution towards the running costs. It was advised that due to financial constraints the local authority partners were not able to contribute to any future running costs of the LEP/Growth Hub.

It was noted that any further questions around funding and future of the LEP/Growth Hub could be raised directly with Suzanne Bennett before 11 February 2022 which was her last day at the SELEP.

**Action:** *To raise any additional questions around funding and future of the LEP/Growth Hub directly with Suzanne Bennett before 11 February 2022.*

### 4. Communications

Ellie Clow provided a short update on the current comms. She advised that SELEP was holding a lunchtime webinar on Covid-19 Recovery Funds on Wednesday 15 December 2021 to which everyone was invited.

She also advised that the SELEP website was undergoing a slight overhaul/update and she welcomed any comments from the steering group members.

It was noted that the work undertaken by the Comms team was starting to slow down towards Christmas however more activity would be forthcoming in January 2022 after the publication of the Creative High Streets report.

Additionally, it was advised that the Growth Hubs opening times over the Christmas period had been published on the website and through social media channels.

## **5. Net Zero**

Jo Simmons introduced the Net Zero item to the steering group members. It was noted that the idea of placing Net Zero on the steering group agenda came out of the last steering group meeting and the flurry of activity in this area in the build-up to COP26.

The steering group was informed that this particular topic had been tackled within the context of clean economic growth by the SELEP Clean Growth Working Group for the last couple of years. The working group had been providing a forum for information exchange and insight into the current activity.

It was noted that this year the work around Net Zero and sustainability in relation to businesses started to trickle down through the Growth Hub network hence why it was felt that the conversation around this topic should be brought to the SEBH Steering Group. It was also felt that the link between the Clean Growth Working Group and the SEBH Steering Group could be strengthened through an ongoing conversation between the members of the two groups.

Following the short introduction, Jo Simmons opened a conversation by posing the following questions to the steering group:

- What activities are taking place at the moment
- What might be relevant to business support and net zero, and
- What might we choose to do about it

She also shared a slide about business support for Net Zero which split the support into two camps – supporting all businesses to decarbonise and supporting low carbon sector businesses. It was felt that supporting all businesses to decarbonise was the main message the Growth Hub should be concentrating on in order to get businesses to make small changes to reduce their carbon emissions.

Jo Simmons listed the various programmes currently available or coming on board in the SELEP area in the near future under the same two headings. These were as follows:

### **Supporting all business to decarbonise**

- LoCASE
- SME Climate Hub
- East Sussex Zero
- K&M Decarbonisation Officer
- Clean Growth South East

### **Supporting low carbon sector businesses**

- LoCASE
- Multiple support programmes
- Clean Growth South East
- South East New Energy

- KICC's CRF project: Net Zero: a pathway to change

The steering group was asked to consider the following two questions:

1. Should we be actively integrating this agenda into our service, or waiting for BEIS instructions?
2. What next steps should, or could the Growth Hub take, to be more coordinated and proactive in our approach?

Following a discussion, the following were collectively agreed:

- To act as experts in SME engagement
- To understand the programmes available in our area fully
- To get a good handle on what's available in our area
- To share learnings from the SME engagement with the programmes' providers
- To invite programmes' providers to the steering group
- To continue to discuss Net Zero as a group on regular basis

*A copy of the slides has been shared with the steering group for further reference.*

**Action:** *To invite Net Zero related programmes to the steering group as appropriate.*

## 6. CRM Update

Mark Jones provided an update on the research undertaken to date.

It was noted that the project will not be taken forward until Growth Hub funding had been confirmed by BEIS.

*A copy of the presentation had been shared with the steering group for further reference.*

## 7. Funding update

- a) FY2021-22 Core Growth Hub Funding – Q2 actuals reporting was completed on time and Q3 funding had been received. Q3 actuals reporting was due with BEIS on 31 January 2022; date for individual returns had been put in diaries with more information on reporting to follow
- b) Peer Networks Programme 2.0 – first claim had been submitted to BEIS

The steering group members were informed that there was still no information about future funding for Growth Hubs.

It was also noted that there had been no feedback on the Bi-annual Growth Hub Report apart from an acknowledgement that it was received.

## 8. SELEP COVID-19 Business Support Fund

Jo Simmons provided a short update on the COVID-19 Business Support Fund which included a presentation of the monitoring dashboard for all three programmes.

It was noted that Adapting with Digital (AWD) and Starting & Succeeding in Business (SSiB) were making good progress on the number of businesses safeguarded and created. The number of grants awarded by both programmes would be reported on at the next meeting.

Regarding the Supporting the Visitor Economy programme it was stated that the grant awards were being processed and the project was comfortable that at least 150 grants would be awarded to individual businesses. The element two of the Visitor Economy programme, to convene businesses and other organisations to map out destination management assets, identify possible gaps in those assets and work together to fill those gaps in order to form an asset library, which would then be used to create and launch a Visitor Economy Re-boot campaign next year, had also been progressing well.

The steering group had also been provided with information on distribution of support and number of Growth Hub referrals for AWD and SSiB.

It was noted that majority of referrals to the programmes came directly from a social media campaign, the self-referral route rather than the Growth Hub route.

A question raised around the data shared and how the Growth Hub referrals were measured i.e. the programmes' provider had been relying on the applicant to tick a relevant box when making an application and/or direct referrals made by the Growth Hub navigators.

Jo Simmons offered to pick this question as an action point and provide further information in due course.

**Action:** *To establish how the Growth Hub referrals for ADW and SSiB were measured by the programme delivery partner.*

*Post meeting note:*

*WSX confirms that for AWD and SSiB, Growth Hub referrals are captured via their registration portal, where the client ticks a box if they have been referred by the Growth Hub. To make this more robust, WSX then cross check registrations against direct Growth Hub referrals, either following those referrals up individually, inviting them to register and/or checking that their registration form has been completed correctly. The most recent cross-checking exercise has resulted in total Growth Hub referrals increasing from 24% to 34%.*

## **9. Growth Hub Website Optimisation**

It was noted the procurement exercise for appointment of delivery partner for the Growth Hub Website Optimisation project had been completed and the contract would be awarded to Commercial Public Ltd.

Further update including initial findings would be shared with the steering group at its next meeting.

**Action:** *To share the findings of the Growth Hub Website Optimisation project with the steering group.*

## 10. Cluster and BEIS Working Groups Update

The steering group was advised that the activities undertaken in collaboration with London Business Hub and Hertfordshire Growth Hub were telemarketing campaign, series of Business Ready podcasts and awareness raising social media campaign.

- **Telemarketing campaign** – delivered by Blueberry Marketing Solutions Limited; full report would be provided in due course
- **Podcasts** – Business Ready: Net Zero, Digital and Business Resilience – recording underway
- **Social Media campaign** – due to start in second week of January 2022

Regarding BEIS working groups, the steering group was informed that the Data, Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group met on 25 November 2021 and reviewed the latest version of the Monitoring & Evaluation Framework, the Development & Delivery Working Group had also met on the same date and looked at the Growth Hub Annual Report template and the Comms, Customer and Partnership Working Group completed the stakeholder mapping and was working on comms and engagement assets. It was noted that next meetings of the working groups were planned for January 2022.

## 11. Skills update

It was noted that a written update would be shared with the steering group following the meeting.

***Action:** To share a written Skills update following the steering group meeting.*

## 12. Future Meetings

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled for 7 March 2022 at 10am and would take place via MS Teams.

## 13. Any Other Business

There was no AOB to discuss.

The steering group meeting closed at 3pm.

### Action points arising from the steering group meeting – summary

Minute	Action	Completed by
Minute 3	To raise any additional questions around funding and future of the LEP/Growth Hub directly with Suzanne Bennett before 11 February 2022.	All
Minute 5	To invite Net Zero related programmes to the steering group as appropriate.	Jo Simmons
Minute 8	To establish how the Growth Hub referrals for ADW and BSS were measured by the programme delivery partner.	Jo Simmons
Minute 9	To share the findings of the Growth Hub Website Optimisation project with the steering group.	Jo Simmons
Minute 11	To share a written Skills update following the steering group meeting.	Iwona Bainbridge-Dyer