

## 1. Background

A paper was presented to Team East Sussex on 17 October 2022, setting out the position of TES in regard to LEP functions being devolved over the next few years. The paper defined TES's roles and responsibilities and described the remit of TES so that, following the publication of the Government's Levelling Up White Paper (LUWP) earlier this year, TES can be clear on its continuing role, focus and overall function. For information, a copy of the paper is available to view here: [TES 17 Oct 2022 – agenda item 6, the future of TES](#).

TES colleagues were asked to consider several fundamental questions on the future composition of TES, including the list of TES's roles and responsibilities, the size and sectoral representation of the TES Board, and the frequency of meetings.

TES colleagues were asked to give the paper further thought, and feed any comments back to Dave Evans by 28 October 2022.

## 2. Feedback from TES members

The paper presented to TES was welcomed by the group, and supported in terms of the direction of travel moving forward. A summary of the feedback provided by TES colleagues is given in *Appendix A*.

In answer to the three specific questions asked in the paper:

- *Are the current roles and responsibilities of TES appropriate?*  
**Yes.** While there are several suggestions for how TES could better discharge some of its duties (strategic oversight, communication, engagement with SMEs), the actual list of TES's roles and responsibilities is still applicable.
- *Is the current configuration of the TES Board appropriate?*  
**Yes.** The current setup of TES in terms of size and sectoral representation was deemed largely sensible and fit-for-purpose.
- *Is the frequency of TES Board meetings appropriate?*  
**No.** While TES Board meetings must continue to be held quarterly, aligned to SELEP Strategic Board meetings, we can reduce the number of scheduled workshops. We can also redefine those workshops for a particular purpose, to be used for regular reporting from the subgroups and for informative presentations on specific topics. (Even with a reduced meeting schedule, TES can always choose to meet more frequently if business needs dictate, or hold additional meetings for a specific purpose.)

An updated draft of the TES Terms of Reference will be shared with this paper, with suggested amendments based on the above.

## 3. Additional feedback on business member recruitment

The feedback also raised an additional query on whether we should go ahead with the planned *business member recruitment* exercise in the new year.

TES will recall that we last conducted a full recruitment exercise during the summer of 2018, and then at the end of 2019 TES members agreed to 'reset the clock' on membership so that it was fully aligned with the membership of SELEP Ltd, which was registered as a company limited by guarantee in March 2020. That meant that the two-year tenures of the current TES business members were due to expire earlier this year in March 2022. However, due to the uncertainty of the ongoing LEP Review throughout all of last year, the TES Board took the decision to extend the terms of its business members for one year, to March 2023, with the expectation that TES will proceed with the recruitment exercise during January 2023.

The feedback provided by TES colleagues suggests that it may still be undesirable to go ahead with recruitment at this time, as despite the LEP Review being concluded, there continues to be an ongoing level of uncertainty.

However, we should acknowledge that a degree of uncertainty is likely to go on indefinitely. We must also be mindful of SELEP's governance procedures in conducting open and competitive recruitment, and the potential risk to SELEP (in terms of core funding being retained) if those procedures aren't strictly adhered to. Therefore, on balance it is proposed that we do go ahead with recruitment but make it as 'light touch' as possible. A brief synopsis of how we might achieve this is given in *Appendix B*.

#### 4. Recommendations

***Further to the feedback provided by TES colleagues, the TES Board is recommended to:***

- ***Agree to reduce the number of scheduled TES workshops from four per annum to "two per annum, if required".***
- ***Agree to repurpose the TES workshops as 'information sharing' meetings, to be used for regular reporting from the subgroups and for informative presentations on specific topics.***
- ***Subject to the above, approve the updated draft TES Terms of Reference (shared with this paper).***
- ***Agree to proceed with the business member recruitment exercise, as described in Appendix B, during January and February 2023.***

#### 5. Next steps

If the above recommendations are agreed, ESCC officers will issue the updated TES Terms of Reference and prepare the appropriate business member recruitment forms, all of which will be shared with the TES Board for approval.

The recruitment process will be implemented during January/February 2023, so that the two-year tenures of business members can (re)start from 1 March 2023.

***Existing business members who wish to continue serving on the TES Board will not be asked to complete an application form, but will be asked simply to confirm via email their intention to be reappointed – emails to be sent to Dave Evans by Friday 13 January 2023.*** The TES Board will then be asked to approve all of the 'reappointments' (for a further two-year period) at its February 2023 meeting.

Following the business member recruitment exercise, the TES Board will need to (re)appoint its Chair and Deputy Chair, and also (re)appoint its representatives on the SELEP Strategic Board as SELEP Ltd Directors. This can be discussed at the February 2023 TES Board meeting, with decisions to be made (by electronic procedure if necessary) during February/March 2023.

**Dave Evans, ESCC**

17/11/22

Feedback from TES colleagues on the current list of TES's roles and responsibilities, as well as the size of the TES Board, sectors represented and frequency of meetings.

- Overall, the current setup of TES seems largely sensible and fit-for-purpose. There is little value in picking apart the details, especially given the current political landscape and potential for even more change in the future.
- TES's role is largely strategic oversight, and that should continue. While we might wish to be more of a 'doing' group, that's what the subgroups are for, and they already do excellent work. It's important for those groups to continue, but with TES providing strategic oversight. Perhaps we need more rigorous reporting from the subgroups, and/or ask the subgroup Chairs to convene their own regular meetings. Better communication between everyone to ensure opportunities aren't missed.
- The frequency of meetings could easily be reduced. Keep the quarterly TES Board meetings (aligned to the SELEP Strategic Board meetings) but perhaps remove/reduce the TES workshops from the schedule.
- There is still a place for 'education' meetings with presentations on specific topics, such as those we've had recently from UKPN and Hydrogen Sussex. Perhaps use the workshops for this purpose. The workshops could also be the place for regular reporting from the subgroups, updates on successful projects etc, rather than at the main TES Board meetings.
- In terms of engagement and TES's role to "Maximise connections with SMEs across the county", we could do more in this area. TES's profile is lower than it should be in the business community.
- Similarly, we could also do more communication with wider partners and neighbouring economic partnerships. There are already strong partnerships that stretch wider than East Sussex, as they tend not to see boundaries in the same way (such as the education sector, culture, visitor economy). Could TES look to engage more with Brighton and Hove, C2C, Kent etc to build stronger collaborative relationships?
- Do we really need to go through the full business member recruitment exercise in the new year? The LEP Review may now be over, but there continues to be an ongoing level of uncertainty. What TES and SELEP need most is a sense of stability and continuity.
- Counter to the above, we should acknowledge that a degree of uncertainty is likely to go on indefinitely, so if we must conduct recruitment (due to our governance procedures), let's try to make it as simple as possible, a 'light touch' refresh.

The full TES Board recruitment procedure is set out in the TES Terms of Reference. The following is a simplified version, aiming to streamline the whole process.

- County Council officers to prepare a TES business member application form and accompanying recruitment briefing note, to be published on the ESCC website during January 2023 (precise date TBC). These documents will simply be updated versions of those used during the last recruitment exercise in July 2018.
- The webpage will be promoted via ESCC's media channels and through TES's business networks. Potential applicants will be given three weeks to respond.
- **Existing business members who wish to continue serving on the TES Board will not be asked to complete an application form.** The TES Board has previously agreed that existing business members can simply be "reappointed at the end of their two-year tenure, subject to a decision by the TES Board" (see [TES Board paper 2 Dec 2019](#) and the TES Terms of Reference, Appendix B, section 2). Business members will be asked only to confirm via email their intention to be reappointed. This still fulfils the open recruitment requirements of SELEP, as all business members were appointed through open recruitment originally, and all of their information has continued to be kept up-to-date by way of the Registers of Interests. The TES Board will be asked to approve the 'reappointments' (for a further two-year period) at its February 2023 meeting.
- Any *new* applications will be considered by County Council officers, in consultation with the TES Chair as necessary, with the key assessment factors being sectoral and geographic representation, and equality/diversity. If required, a virtual assessment panel can be convened to evaluate the new applications. If any of the new applicants appear to be a strong fit for TES, we will consider asking them to join TES as *additional* members (potentially increasing the business membership by say one or two). We could otherwise consider asking them to join a relevant subgroup of TES instead of TES itself. Any proposal to increase the business membership of TES will be put to the TES Board for approval.