

Attendees:

AB	Adam Bryan	South East LEP	JHv	Jo Havers	University of Brighton
AG	Alex Green	DWP	JW	Jon Wheeler	East Sussex CC
AT	Alison Turner	FSB	KG	Cllr Keith Glazier	East Sussex CC
BH	Ben Hook	Rother DC	KT	Katy Thomas	East Sussex CC
BP	Brett Pearson	Locate East Sussex	LR	Lisa Rawlinson	Lewes DC / Eastbourne BC
CB	Chris Bending	Wealden DC	LS	Lisa Simmonds	East Sussex CC
CE	Christina Ewbank	ACES	MC	Matthew Cheney	East Sussex CC
CS	Clive Soper	Hailsham & District Chamber	ME	Martin Ellis	Recruitment South East
DC	Douglas Chapman	East Sussex CC	NS	Nigel Stewardson	DLUHC
DE	Dave Evans	East Sussex CC	PB	Cllr Paul Barnett	Hastings BC
DH	Donna Harfield	East Sussex College	PH	Paul Hetherington	HIS Ltd
DS	David Sheppard	D-RisQ Ltd	RD	Richard Dawson	East Sussex CC
ES	Emma Smith	DLUHC	RE	Rachel Evans	East Sussex CC
GP	Graham Peters (CHAIR)	ES Rural Partnership	SB	Sue Baxter	University of Sussex
HA	Holly Aquilina	East Sussex CC	SD	Stewart Drew	De La Warr Pavilion
JHa	James Harris	East Sussex CC	VC	Victoria Conheady	Hastings BC

Apologies:

AN	Cllr Ann Newton	Wealden DC	PS	Penny Shimmin	Sussex CDA
CBa	Cllr Christine Bayliss	Rother DC	ZN	Cllr Zoe Nicholson	Lewes DC
JM	Cllr James MacCleary	Lewes DC			

1. Welcome and introductions

- 1.1. **GP** welcomed everyone to the TES workshop meeting and paid tribute to Councillor Rupert Simmons who recently passed away. **GP** led TES in a minute's silence.
- 1.2. **PH** introduced himself to the group, joining the TES Board as a new business representative following the recent business member recruitment exercise.
- 1.3. **ES** and **NS** also introduced themselves. **ES** is the new Levelling Up lead for the South East area at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).
- 1.4. **GP** asked the group for any specific conflicts of interest with today's agenda items and for any additional interests not already held on record. **CE** advised that she has been appointed as a Councillor at Eastbourne BC following the local elections held earlier this month, but hopes to continue representing ACES as a business representative on TES, so will update her Register of Interests accordingly.

2. Previous TES minutes, 6 February 2023

- 2.1. **GP** confirmed that all of the previous actions had been completed. **HA** added that for action 5.3, graduate recruitment will be discussed as part of the *Skills Summit* taking place on 25 May 2023, for which TES colleagues have already been sent an invitation.
- 2.2. The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. Matters arising

Terms of Reference:

- 3.1. **DE** recapped the recent business member recruitment exercise, during which the TES Board approved (by electronic procedure) the creation of a 'reserve list', so that should anyone leave the TES Board over the next year or so, TES can simply appoint a replacement directly from the reserve list without needing to go through another long recruitment exercise. As agreed, an appropriate revision has been made to the TES Terms of Reference, and the updated draft has been shared with TES for approval.

Decision: The TES Board approved the updated draft TES Terms of Reference (v3.3, May 2023).

Local elections:

- 3.2. Borough and District colleagues provided updates on the results of this month's local elections. **Eastbourne BC** remains Lib-Dem led, with Councillor Stephen Holt replacing Councillor David Tutt as Leader. Discussions at **Lewes DC** are ongoing, but the Council administration is 'likely' to be a Green/

Labour/Lib-Dem alliance. At **Rother DC**, Councillor Doug Oliver (Leader) and Councillor Christine Bayliss (TES representative) have both retained their seats but there has been a change in the overall balance of the Council, so colleagues will be kept apprised when TES duties have been issued to the appropriate portfolio holder. Similarly, Councillor Ann Newton has retained her seat at **Wealden DC** but is unlikely to continue as Leader as no party has overall control; discussions are advancing. There were no elections at **Hastings BC** so the Council continues as a Labour minority administration with no changes.

SELEP update:

- 3.3. **AB** advised that options for the future of SELEP will be presented at the next SELEP Strategic Board meeting in July, in response to the Government's recent announcement that LEP funding may be discontinued from April 2024. Scenarios are likely to range from maintaining a small SELEP team for 18-24 months to continue some of the essential work (best case), to completely dispersing the team/work into local authorities (worst case). Some of the more important considerations include residual GPF and GBF funding, plus financial and governance arrangements (such as the joint committee and contracts for 100+ projects). Crucially there is a very strong body of work that SELEP has developed over the past twelve years that must be retained, and should be used to inform whatever comes next.
- 3.4. **AB** noted that a Government questionnaire has been issued to all LEPs and local authorities, seeking views on the impacts of this policy change, with a deadline of 19 May 2023. **AB** speculated as to whether the survey would have any tangible impact on the Government's direction of travel or policy decisions, but **ES** clarified that DLUHC officials are scrutinising all responses very carefully, and further announcements are expected after the summer.
- 3.5. **CS** urged both **AB** and **ES** to ensure *business* is involved throughout the upcoming period of change. **AB** agreed that continued business engagement is vital and suggested that East Sussex is already in a very strong position in this regard – TES has always been business led, so preserving and strengthening TES moving forward would be a very positive step. **JHa** underlined a commitment made by the County Council at a previous TES meeting to retain TES, regardless of any LEP Review outcomes, to ensure the close working collaborative relationship with business continues.
- 3.6. **AB** confirmed that he will be standing down as SELEP CEO from July 2023 and thanked everyone for their support over the last few years. **GP** thanked **AB** on behalf of TES.

DWP In Work Progression:

- 3.7. **AG** introduced himself and delivered a short presentation on the new 'In Work Progression' offer from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), designed to help low-income earners on Universal Credit gain additional support to help secure promotions and increase earnings. **AG** described how DWP can help support employers, and in turn how employers can support employees, and offered to visit teams/colleagues and speak in more detail (contact directly: alex.green@dwp.gov.uk). **JHa** highly commended the scheme and **GP** encouraged everyone to share the information widely through their networks. In Work Progression is expected to be rolled out nationwide in the autumn.

4. Economic Growth Strategy 2024

- 4.1. **KT** provided an update on work to develop a new Economic Growth Strategy for East Sussex, and delivered a short presentation. The previous Growth Strategy covered the period 2014-20, and its immediate successor was the Economy Recovery Plan which was created in response to the pandemic. It is therefore timely to now set out a new framework for 2024+.
- 4.2. The strategy will be *evidence based* with a clear focus on *economic* growth. A lot of work has already been undertaken on generating a strong evidence base, such as the recent Economic Insight Analysis work and the study of Census 2021 data. Development of the strategy itself is still at an early mobilisation stage, with the eventual sign-off and launch expected to take place in Spring 2024.
- 4.3. **KT** explained that the project organisation will comprise an Oversight Group, which will include two places for TES representatives, plus a Scrutiny Reference Group and an Operational Project Team. **KT** requested that any TES members interested in joining the Oversight Group should express their interest to the TES Chair by the end of this week.

Action: TES members wishing to join the Economic Growth Strategy Oversight Board to advise GP by 19 May 2023.

4.4. The group was also asked to consider a few basic questions on the overall vision, intended outcomes, opportunities and timeframe of the strategy, and to provide any initial thoughts. The following comments were offered by TES colleagues:

- The Strategy will be a partnership document, with TES having overall ownership.
- Input from business will be vital to ensure the strategy achieves its aim, as the views of business are often very different to those of local authority. Importantly, honest *commitment* from business is required.
- TES is mindful that the political landscape is likely to include a general election, but a change of Government will not mean that the needs of East Sussex will change. We should proceed with our plans so that whatever comes next, we're already in a strong position to be on the front foot with Government.
- There is a lot of experience around the table with diverse expertise, so it should be utilised. Perhaps having only two TES representatives on the Oversight Group is insufficient, or perhaps a larger working group could be formed.
- Borough and District Local Plans are coming forward, and considerable business consultation has already taken place in their development, so they need to be considered as part of the strategy.
- Levelling Up should also be included in the strategy.

4.5. GP asked the group to please give further consideration to the questions posed in the slides, and feed any additional comments back to ESCC's Economic Development team.

Action: TES colleagues to email economic.development@eastsussex.gov.uk with any comments on the Economic Growth Strategy.

5. Local Transport Plan

5.1. JW and LS delivered a presentation on the County Council's fourth Local Transport Plan (LTP), providing information on its context and the various stages of development. Initial scoping, evidence review and early stakeholder engagement has been completed, and a range of issues and opportunities have been identified, but engagement has so far been low from businesses and young people. The current stage of strategy development involves the modelling of different scenarios, with a 'preferred' scenario seeing an increased focus on community cohesion.

5.2. The group was asked to consider a series of questions throughout the presentation, and offered the following comments in response:

- Businesses would ideally like to see faster and more reliable train links to London, and dualling as much as possible of the A21 and A27.
- Some of the stats in the preferred scenario model seem questionable: a 38% increase in rail travel is unlikely given the current rail service levels provided, and a 63% increase in bus travel is surely only achievable within towns. Evidence-based research and business input are essential.
- Approaches to changing behaviour will be important when considering future modes of transport, so the strategy should include programmes that support behaviour changes. We've all got a role to play in getting people out of their cars towards more active travel.
- There is a need for improved public transport access to universities, both within the county and further afield, and particularly from the east of the county, to enable better HE interaction (including for research, knowledge exchange and support).
- Much of the county is highly rural, and not all of it is served by viable public transport options, making road vehicles a necessity.
- Programmes should be delivered in partnership with local community groups.
- Should the plan consider an orbital route?
- The freight transport network must be considered, particularly the removal of bottlenecks.
- Autonomous vehicles are already on the horizon, possibly within the timeframe of this strategy, so their impact must be taken into account.
- Certainty of funding will be key to ensuring the longevity of the strategy.

- For future engagement with businesses, active use of the LinkedIn platform should be encouraged as it is extremely popular in the business community. Also utilise existing business networks such as the FSB and Chambers of Commerce, and ESCC partners who engage with the business community such as Locate East Sussex and the BES Growth Hub. To better engage with younger people, use Instagram.
- 5.3. **JW** asked the group to please give further consideration to the questions posed in the slides, and feed any additional comments back to the LTP team.
- Action: TES colleagues to email LocalTransportPlan@eastsussex.gov.uk with any comments on the Local Transport Plan, deadline 26 May 2023.**
- 5.4. The next steps of strategy development will involve continued stakeholder engagement, including a public consultation from October 2023. The final LTP is expected to be launched in Spring 2024.
- 6. AOB**
- 6.1. **HA** reminded the group that the Skills Summit event is taking place on 25 May 2023 at the Welcome Building (Devonshire Quarter) in Eastbourne. Places are limited so colleagues are encouraged to book their place ASAP.
- 6.2. **ME** noted the significant increase in the use of Artificial Intelligence over recent months, and the impact of AI Chatbots on people's everyday lives. **HA** advised that the above Skills Summit will include an exhibition of AI tools for people to try out, and speakers from the University of Sussex will talk about the impact of AI on the world of work.
- 6.3. **JHv** provided a brief update on the University of Brighton's campus in Eastbourne. A property advisor has been appointed (to look at the lease, covenant etc) and the university continues to work closely with the local authority, but discussions are still ongoing and no formal proposition or decisions have been made.
- 6.4. **AT** commented that figures from the national Small Business Index (SBI) show a rebound in small business confidence, but the cost-of-living squeeze is holding back growth. Regional SBI figures are due to be published later this week.
- 6.5. **GP** confirmed that the next TES Board meeting will be held *in person* at the De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill and reiterated the revised date of 3 July 2023.

Meeting closed at 16:45.

Summary of decisions:

- 3.1 The TES Board **approved** the updated draft TES Terms of Reference (v3.3, May 2023).

Summary of actions:

- 4.3 TES members wishing to join the Economic Growth Strategy Oversight Board to advise **GP** by 19 May 2023.
- 4.5 TES colleagues to email economic.development@eastsussex.gov.uk with any comments on the Economic Growth Strategy.
- 5.3 TES colleagues to email LocalTransportPlan@eastsussex.gov.uk with any comments on the Local Transport Plan, deadline 26 May 2023.