

Attendees:

ACh	Ana Christie	Sussex Chamber of Commerce	KG	Cllr Keith Glazier	East Sussex CC
ACo	Alex Colbran	East Sussex CC	KT	Kane Tudor	East Sussex CC
BH	Ben Hook	Rother DC	LR	Lisa Rawlinson	Lewes DC / Eastbourne BC
BP	Brett Pearson	Locate East Sussex	ME	Martin Ellis	Recruitment South East
CBe	Chris Bending	Wealden DC	NH	Nathaniel Hepburn	Charleston
CE	Christina Ewbank	ACES	NS	Nigel Stewardson	Cities & Local Growth Unit (CLGU)
CS	Clive Soper	Hailsham & District Chamber	PB	Cllr Paul Barnett	Hastings BC
DE	Dave Evans	East Sussex CC	PC	Cllr Paul Coleshill	Wealden DC
DG	Diana Garnham	Skills East Sussex (SES)	PD	Pranesh Datta	Hastings BC
DH	Donna Harfield	East Sussex College	PH	Paul Hetherington	HIS Ltd
DS	David Sheppard	D-RisQ Ltd (CHAIR)	RC	Rob Cottrill	Lewes DC / Eastbourne BC
ES	Emma Smith	DLUHC	RD	Richard Dawson	East Sussex CC
JHa	James Harris	East Sussex CC	SD	Stewart Drew	De La Warr Pavilion
JHv	Jo Havers	University of Brighton	SH	Cllr Stephen Holt	Eastbourne BC
JS	Jo Simmons	South East LEP			

Apologies:

AT	Alison Turner	FSB	PS	Penny Shimmin	Sussex CDA
CBa	Cllr Christine Bayliss	Rother DC	SB	Sue Baxter	University of Sussex
HR	Helen Russell	South East LEP	SS	Sally Staples	East Sussex CC
JB	Jonathan Buckwell	Developers East Sussex (DES)	VC	Victoria Conheady	Hastings BC

1. Welcome and introductions

- 1.1. **DS** welcomed everyone to the TES Board meeting and led round table introductions. **DS** thanked **SD** for again hosting the meeting at the De La Warr Pavilion.
- 1.2. **DS** asked the group for any specific conflicts of interest with today's agenda items and for any additional interests not already held on record. No additional interests were declared.

2. Previous TES minutes, 3 July 2023

- 2.1. **DS** ran through the previous actions, noting that those relating to business member positions on boards would be picked up at today's meeting under agenda item 7. One outstanding action relating to graduate retention data will need to be rolled on (as **SB** sent apologies for today's meeting so was unable to provide an update).

Action: SB to share additional University of Sussex graduate retention data, specifically on the three-in-four graduates that do not stay in the region (rolled over from the previous TES Board meeting).

- 2.2. The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. SELEP Transition Plan

- 3.1. **JS** provided an overview of the work undertaken to date on LEP transition and the current position. Following the Chancellor's announcement in March 2023 that the Government was minded to end core funding for LEPs from April 2024, the SELEP Strategic Board took the decision in July 2023 to work towards full integration of all LEP functions into Upper Tier Local Authorities (UTLAs) by 31 March 2024. On 4 August 2023, LEPs and UTLAs received a letter from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) affirming their previous "minded to" position, thereby confirming that Government sponsorship and funding of LEPs will cease from April 2024.
- 3.2. In consultation with the Senior Officers Group (SOG), SELEP established a series of workstreams to facilitate integration planning, covering the areas of Governance and Capital Programme; Partnership and Networks; Growth Hub and Business Support; Data and Intelligence; and Resourcing. This has culminated in an overall *SELEP Integration Plan* being developed, a draft version of which has been shared with TES and will be taken to this week's SELEP Strategic Board meeting for endorsement, with a final version to go to the next Strategic Board meeting on 8 December 2023 for approval.
- 3.3. **RD** advised that ESCC has made resource available across departments, including Finance, HR and Legal, to ensure full engagement in each of the SELEP workstreams, and teams are mobilising to take on appropriate functions, particularly ongoing management of the funding programmes. He added

that, as the Integration Plan is largely written from a SELEP perspective, ESCC officers are now working on an *East Sussex Integration Plan*, arranging the activities of the SELEP plan into county-specific actions. A first draft is expected to be produced over the next month, so will be shared with TES ahead of the next TES Board meeting on 4 December 2023.

- 3.4. **DS** asked whether there are any risks/barriers to completing a timely transition, to which **JS** responded that the main risks are resourcing from all partners, delays in funding announcements (for the Growth Hub) and the timing of government guidance (such as when the Accountable Body is allowed to relinquish its responsibility and when the Assurance Framework ceases to apply). **RD** noted that in terms of the risks identified for Growth Hubs, in East Sussex we've already moved the service in-house, so we've already mitigated the risk of there being a gap in business support services.
- 3.5. **CE** queried the Partnership and Networks workstream, and how the SELEP working groups proposed to continue into 2024/25 will be resourced. **JS** clarified that most of the working groups can be picked up naturally by other groups at a local level, but three – the South East Creative Economy Network, Housing and Development Group, and Major Projects Group – are strategically important enough to be continued with a small amount of residual LEP funding, but hosted by other UTLAs. The specific details on which authorities will house them are to be confirmed.
- 3.6. **JS** highlighted that one of the key principles of the SELEP Integration Plan is to maintain the voice of business. Government guidance is clear that they encourage UTLAs to create, or continue to engage with, an Economic Growth Board (or similar) made up of local business leaders and relevant representative bodies, in order to provide the view of local businesses as part of regional decision making. **RD** noted that before the transition work even began, in East Sussex we agreed that TES will continue to operate beyond the life of SELEP as the strategic advisory economic growth board for the county. As TES is currently aligned to SELEP as a federated sub-board, the transition will obviously have implications (e.g. for the TES Terms of Reference and precisely how TES operates moving forward, relationships with our own subgroups and networks etc), but all of that will be summarised in the East Sussex Integration Plan. **KG** added that TES is a success story, with its established framework and subgroups operating well, and is something we're all committed to.
- 3.7. On behalf of the TES Board, **KG** conveyed his thanks to the SELEP team for the work they are doing and the speed at which they're moving forward, which is all very much appreciated. We have every confidence in the SELEP Secretariat, and in the other federated boards, to enable this transition to be made smoothly, and are proud to be a part of that work. **ES** noted that from a DLUHC perspective, it is very refreshing to see the LEP operating on the front foot with everyone working so proactively.

4. Economic Growth Strategy 2024

- 4.1. **KT** delivered a presentation on the ongoing work to develop a new Economic Growth Strategy, covering the progress to date and the timeline through to adoption in Spring 2024. Since the last update to TES, the Oversight Group has been established, which includes TES business member representation; consultants SQW have been appointed; and a call for evidence has been completed.
- 4.2. The next phase will involve consultation activity, with a series of workshops to take place during November. This will include five 'place based' workshops, each being held in person and hosted by our Borough and District colleagues – *TES members and supporting officers are encouraged to attend these local workshops*. Various 'topic' workshops are also being arranged as virtual sessions via MS Teams, so again TES members and supporting officers will be able to attend as many as they wish. A consultation briefing pack is being prepared and will be shared in due course, and invitations to the place-based workshops will follow from Borough and District colleagues.

Action: TES members and supporting officers are encouraged to attend the place-based workshops for the Economic Growth Strategy during November 2023.

- 4.3. **DS** advised that the overall timescale of the strategy is stretching out to 2050, which is extremely ambitious but also very exciting, as it allows us to conceptualise where we want to be in 30+ years' time, and thereby gives us the scope to include a great deal. It's intended to be a 'living' strategy to aid and influence how we make decisions in the future. In due course the strategy will be accompanied by an action plan, but for now we have the opportunity to guide and feed into the strategy's development through the upcoming workshops.

- 4.4. **PD** recommended that a review of old strategies be conducted as part of this process, to understand what did/didn't work and to ensure any lessons have been learnt.
- 4.5. **ACH** suggested that trade should be considered as part of the strategy, particularly international trade, import/export and the global growth economy. **JHv** emphasised that businesses don't care about administrative boundaries so we cannot be parochial – 'place' needs to reach beyond our borders. **PH** suggested the Vacuum sector be invited to participate as it's a huge growth industry.
- 4.6. **ES** stressed that the business voice is very important to DLUHC so urged **KT** to invite businesses to the workshops as an open call, and also suggested the topics are not restricted but are kept flexible.

5. Sussex Wine Tourism: a Plan for Growth

- 5.1. **NH** delivered a presentation on wine tourism across the Sussex region, firstly providing some background to Sussex Modern (including some of their key projects post-covid, and noting that the partnership has been joined by 20 wine leaders from across the region), and then describing the development of an investment plan for Sussex wine tourism. The new growth plan was launched in June this year and covers the whole of Sussex, not just East Sussex.
- 5.2. Sussex wine is estimated to have generated £109.8m of value in 2020 for the local economy, of which 'wine tourism' is worth some £25m. The target is to increase the impact of wine tourism to £283m by 2040, creating 3,633 new jobs. The growth plan goes into a lot of detail on what needs to be done to achieve these goals, but in terms of next steps there are two key priority actions: Positioning and narrative (developing an overarching narrative for Sussex wine tourism under the agreed name 'Sussex Winelands'); and Orientation and signage (providing a coherent identity for the Sussex Winelands with highway signs remaining an important tool to direct visitors to attractions).
- 5.3. **PC** questioned where our wine tourists are coming from. **NH** advised that a high number currently come from London, but acknowledged that the international market is of greater benefit to the wider economy so is considered in the strategy. **ACH** offered to help in this regard and discuss the trade aspect.
- 5.4. **CE** asked what colleagues can do in terms of sharing messages via our hotels. **NH** suggested a single message is helpful, so for now the Sussex Modern website is the best place to direct people.
- 5.5. **JHa** queried the barriers, to which **NH** responded that the main obstacles lie mostly in the infrastructure between businesses, i.e. joining the dots through tourism infrastructure, accommodation etc, rather than specific barriers to production itself.
- 5.6. More information on Sussex wine tourism can be found on the [Sussex Modern website](#), and the new growth plan is available to view here: [Sussex Wine Tourism: a Plan for Growth](#).

6. SELEP Strategic Board, 13 October 2023

- 6.1. **JS** ran through the agenda pack for the upcoming SELEP Strategic Board meeting and highlighted anything of significance not already covered above, in particular the Growing Places Fund (GPF) paper, which has options for discussion/decision.
- 6.2. SELEP is currently holding £9.61m of unallocated GPF funding, with further repayments totalling £5.315m potentially due to be made in 2023/24, meaning there could be a total of £14.925m GPF available for deployment by 31 March 2024. The total amount of outstanding GPF loan funding still to be repaid is £29.4m by 16 existing projects (including 5 East Sussex projects to pay back approx. £9.6m). As SELEP is to be drawn to a close by the end of March 2024, the paper sets out potential options for the deployment of GPF – Option 1 is to retain GPF as a regional loan programme spanning the SELEP legacy area but with another partner authority invited to manage the fund as an ongoing loan scheme; and Option 2 is to disaggregate the funding on a per-capita basis to the six partner authorities, according to one of three possible localised approaches (sub-options A, B and C).
- 6.3. The group discussed this at length, and while it was acknowledged that all of the scenarios are complex, overall it was agreed that Option 1 would not be viable for East Sussex (with a requirement for loan agreements to be transferred from Essex CC to the selected authority as incoming Accountable Body, a new decision-making board needing to be established with all local authority partners as it would not be appropriate for the lead authority to take all funding decisions in isolation, and the cost of

administering the loan scheme all needing to be considered by the selected authority). **TES members agreed to support and endorse Option 2, disaggregation, as the preferred option**, as it gives the greatest flexibility to federated areas, with more opportunity for local authorities to determine and support local priorities, providing each local area more certainty around the amount of GPF funding available to them in future.

- 6.4. However, it was suggested that more time is needed to further consider the 'sub-options' (A, B and C) presented in the paper for precisely how the funding will be divided. **RD** advised that ESCC officers favour sub-option A, and consider B an acceptable compromise, but do not think sub-option C is a viable choice. However, at this moment we are not yet in a position to make an informed decision, having only received the papers on Friday, and while we appreciate the importance of agreeing the 'overall' approach at the SELEP Strategic Board meeting (i.e. endorsing Option 2), given the complexities of the situation it was proposed that these sub-options are given further consideration ahead of the next decision-making meeting on the overall options being applied, which is the SELEP Accountability Board meeting on 17 November 2023, attended by the six UTLA Leaders. **TES members agreed to this approach.**

Post meeting update: at the SELEP Strategic Board meeting on 13 October 2023, Option 2 was agreed, but Essex colleagues also proposed a vote on the adoption of sub-option A, which was accepted. The subsequent vote was carried – the Board agreed to endorse Option 2A.

- 6.5. **DS** also highlighted the SELEP Investment Panel meeting scheduled for 1 December 2023, to discuss the reallocation of approximately £2m of Getting Building Fund (GBF) to prioritised projects, and asked for a TES business member to accompany him and **KG** as East Sussex representatives. **CS** volunteered to join the Investment Panel meeting. **ACo** gave a brief GBF update to the group, recalling that six project submissions were made in East Sussex, and following an independent assessment this was shortlisted to two prioritised projects which were submitted to SELEP, as endorsed by TES on 21 September 2023 via electronic procedure. Fifteen project applications have been submitted across all of the federated boards totalling approx. £7.5m.

7. TES business member roles

- 7.1. **DS** advised that he is not unduly rushing to fill all of the roles on the various boards, as they are not critical positions and he would rather take further time to consider them properly, hence prioritising meeting with business members individually (which has been done over the past few months).
- 7.2. For the TES Deputy Chair role, two TES business members have put themselves forward, so the process is underway and will be further advanced soon.
- 7.3. **PH** put himself forward for the Business East Sussex (BES) Chair role, and was subsequently offered the position, which he has now accepted.
- 7.4. For the other external boards, which currently include the Newhaven Enterprise Zone Board, the Newhaven Town Deal Board and the Hastings Town Deal Board, **DS** has already confirmed that he won't take them on himself in order to maintain some neutrality and to give other TES business members the opportunity to get more involved. Any TES business member interested in representing TES on those boards should let **DS** know.

Action: TES business members interested in representing TES on external boards to advise DS.

- 7.5. **LR** flagged that a number of regeneration boards in Newhaven are coming together under the government's Pathfinder funding simplification pilot, so the remit of the Newhaven Town Deal Board will expand to also provide strategic oversight across their Future High Streets Fund and Levelling Up Fund, potentially making it a much more interesting position. More details are given in the stakeholder reports.

8. Moving forward: TES communications strategy

- 8.1. **DS** raised the possibility of developing a new communications plan for TES, to operate post-March 2024. Up until now TES has always been a federated sub-board of SELEP, but when the LEP Transition process is concluded, while TES will continue to be the strategic advisory economic growth board for East Sussex, it will no longer be aligned to SELEP. Therefore, now is the ideal time to start to consider how TES should project itself in the future. **ME** has already been asked to set this in motion with some

early analysis, and TES members are asked to contribute with any initial ideas or feedback before it is progressed any further – what we want to achieve, how it could be funded, what mediums we might use, whether it's even a practical and worthwhile course of action etc.

8.2. Some of the immediate comments from the group are as follows:

- In any strategy we need to be very clear about what we want TES to do and what we want the audience to do.
- We must avoid duplication with partners' existing communication channels (e.g. FSB, Chambers etc) as we already have that reach through those colleagues.
- Different audiences require different methods of communication, so the channels we use will need to reflect the audience.
- The recent 'big panel discussions' in Eastbourne were very successful (including DigiFest, a sustainability summit and a tourism summit). Something similar but on a larger East Sussex scale could be considered.
- We need to be clear on what information we're permitted to communicate (e.g. the TES stakeholder reports are published on the SELEP website so are already in the public domain and can be shared widely).
- East Sussex and Kent are unique in that they already have European and international trade due to their proximity to the Channel. Let's utilise that advantage, particularly for inward investment.
- From a DLUHC view, the government wants to see strong economic growth boards established with good business membership, so what we've got with TES clearly works very well, but from an outreach perspective we could perhaps consider a change of name (i.e. branding).
- TES is at a crossroads, so perhaps we ought to be very clear on TES's future objectives, mission statement etc *before* beginning any work on comms.

8.3. **DS** added that another potential change moving forward is to evolve the TES agenda. It's a business led group so we ought to see more involvement from businesses and more participation in setting agenda items. TES should be seen as an independent, business led group that is of high value to its partners and stakeholders, so we should structure our approach to provide that. As with the above comms, **DS** would welcome any input from TES members on this.

9. Additional updates and stakeholder reports (for information)

9.1. No additional comments.

10. AOB

10.1. **DS** advised that he has arranged a visit to the world-class Plexal Innovation Hub at London Olympic Park in Stratford on Wednesday 22 November 2023, with space for around eight or nine colleagues. If anyone would like to join the trip, please flag your interest ASAP.

Action: TES colleagues interested in visiting the Plexal Innovation Hub in London on 22 November 2023 to advise DS.

10.2. **DS** informed the group that, moving forward, any items for AOB should be sent to the TES Chair in advance of the meeting, so they can be tabled correctly.

Action: TES members to send any items for AOB to DS and DE in advance of future TES meetings.

End 17:04

Summary of actions:

2.1 **SB** to share additional University of Sussex graduate retention data, specifically on the three-in-four graduates that do not stay in the region (rolled over from the previous TES Board meeting).

- 4.2 TES members and supporting officers are encouraged to attend the place-based workshops for the Economic Growth Strategy during November 2023.
- 7.4 TES business members interested in representing TES on external boards to advise **DS**.
- 10.1 TES colleagues interested in visiting the Plexal Innovation Hub in London on 22 November 2023 to advise **DS**.
- 10.2 TES members to send any items for AOB to **DS** and **DE** in advance of future TES meetings.