

Business Leadership Group Minutes

Tuesday 6th October 2020.

Microsoft Teams Meeting.

No.	Agenda Item
1	<p>Introductions, Apologies and Conflicts of Interest</p>
<p>The introductions were made and apologies were noted for James Gilgrist who was represented by Antonio Tucker. Conflicts of interest in relation to the Growth Hub were declared for Linda Middleton Jones, Stewart Horne, Heather Hillman, Sue Wilkinson, Richard Stevens and Dolores Riordan.</p> <p>Many declaration of interest forms have now become outdated, forms had been circulated to the group prior to the meeting and it was requested that those who had not yet done so return a completed form.</p>	
2	<p>Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising</p>
<p>It was agreed that the minutes were an accurate representation of the previous meeting.</p>	
3	<p>Future of the Business Leadership Group</p>
<p>The LEP Board has signed off the new terms of reference. Within the new terms of reference the membership of the group had been revised. Gratitude and thanks were noted from the Business Leadership Group and HotSW LEP to those who had left the group. The group welcomed new members Dr. Philip Mitchell of Lumentum and VC of Torbay High Tech Forum and Stuart Elford, Chief Executive of Devon and Plymouth Chamber of Commerce and Chair of British Chambers of Commerce SW.</p> <p>As innovation has now been taken out of the remit of the Business Leadership Group with the formation of a HotSW Innovation Board, the group has said goodbye to Robert Kathro of the Environmental Futures and Big Data Lab, Brendon Noble of the Institute of Knowledge Exchange and Richard Adams of the University of Plymouth. The Group noted their thanks to these members for their valuable contributions. All of their institutions are now represented on the newly formed Innovation Board.</p> <p>There remains vacant roles on the Group, and in line with the ambitions set out in the terms of reference sector specialists shall be approached to fill the vacant posts. A specialist in photonics now sits on the Group and specialists in marine, defence, digital and agriculture have been approached.</p> <p>To ensure an appropriate balance, the importance of each organisations sending only one representative was stressed, although in the event that a member is not able to join, a representative from their organisation may attend.</p> <p>In light of the immensely challenging times in which businesses find themselves as they face Covid-19 and an upcoming Exit from the European Union it was stated that the Group's responsibility was to feed into the LEP Board the specific challenges facing businesses, and the support provision required.</p> <p>AR added additional context highlighting how the current modelling shows the area experiencing over 10% unemployment by Christmas, with figures from the Growth Hub showing that the key issue facing businesses is survival. Brexit poses an additional challenge which, at present, is not getting the needed attention from government. There is therefore a concern that government response to Brexit will be concertinaed and difficult to deliver. Businesses have lost their resilience and new levels of support, such as the new furlough scheme are not</p>	

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favorable to businesses in the tourism or hospitality sector. The coming months will be immensely challenging as levels of support will need to cover recovery, response and critical shock at once.

JB noted these issues but drew attention to opportunity sectors in the area such as photonics. Whilst it was agreed there were cause for optimism, the overarching context was that of survival.

Thanks were noted to Karl Tucker for ensuring that the future of the Leadership Groups remain a constructive body, and AR and JB for ensuring responsibility and relevance.

For those areas not in our remit there are monthly meetings between the respective chairs of each group to ensure cross-group working.

The group formally agreed to the new terms of reference.

4 Business Support Provision

AR outlined the current provision of business support which included:

- Growth Hub – DCC Delivery Team
 - Service for All
 - COVID support
 - Kickstarter grants
- Growth Hub Supplementary funding programme
£208k general funding uplift in response to Covid-19. Needs to be spent by 03/21. Used to fund extra activity during Covid-19 and additional funding allocated to sector support, BAME business support, access to finance, additional funding for GH cluster activity (£26k).

- Scale-Up programme

Procured as separate service and delivered by Inspire. Supported 42 businesses. Programme has been adjusted to reflect changes in demand due to Covid-19. Contract will run out in march 2021, but will continue to be delivered until October 2021. Looking forward it could be re-procured in the pre-pandemic model, be continued with a similar but flexible model or not procured again at all.

It was asked whether feedback and evaluation could inform the re-delivery of the programme.

SWB noted his bias having already taken part in the Goldman Sachs element of the programme. He felt that the programme offered an invaluable support network but queried whether going forward the programme might be better rebranding to reflect the current survival needs of businesses.

CB added that Inspire had agreed to deliver a 'Scale-Up Lite' and were working with businesses to highlight upcoming opportunities. These changes will make any evaluation of the programme very difficult and so it is felt that qualitative evaluation might be the best route.

SWB volunteered to support this evaluation and re-procurement.

Any pre-consultation / tender documents will be circulated with the LEP Management Team, SWB and AH.

- Nuclear Supply Chain
- ERDF Inward Investment
- Peer Networks
£180k, very prescriptive guidelines, delivery until 03/21. Working with existing partners across the region to deliver 12 cohorts covering manufacturing, medical, food and drink, defence, nuclear, aerospace, chambers and social enterprise. Unfortunately, the prescriptive guidelines barred the photonics and tourism sector. LMJ noted her current work with the Creative sector and whether that sector could be included in this peer network programme.
- ASBA
Amazon Small Business Accelerator is a programme delivered by Enterprise Nation and offers free online business support to small businesses. The programme's goal is to reach 200,000 businesses across the UK by

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May 2021 and is a combination of web-based learning and workshops. Enterprise Nation has offered the LEP the opportunity to partner with the programme, giving us the opportunity to tailor the programme to our own needs. The objectives currently suggested by Enterprise Nation covers digital transformation, helping individuals explore entrepreneurial skill-sets and support to the hospitality and tourism sector in developing an online footprint.

It was asked whether this was the right focus for the area.

SW felt that the current digital skills provision delivered by Charlotte was fit for purpose and wondered how this linked up with her work. JB responded that it was Charlotte who had brokered the introduction and it had all been linked up but would ensure that Charlotte's work would not be replicated.

SH felt that the programme would be highly useful and mirrored a similar programme which had recently been run in West Devon and South Hams by the pop-up business school. The follow up report highlighted that over 100 people registered with 60% taking part and 30% staying for the whole week. **Action: SH to send through report.** These programmes are useful, but need to incorporate local market knowledge.

KL expressed a concern that Amazon's branding brings some reputational issues in terms of their role in forcing out small businesses. In addition to this KL had sight of some material from an Amazon-led workshop where it encouraged businesses in the workshop to sign up on their website. KL felt that there should be an effort to further examine the wraparound market knowledge to compensate for this.

JB asked whether food producers and manufacturers be included in those sectors being targeted.

HH added that DCC had recently developed a package of measures which included some of these issues.

AR reiterated that this was a free programme.

- Final report for EU Exit Readiness Survey and Evaluation of EU Exit Readiness Programme
- Access to Finance
- LEP Building Back Better

In terms of current gaps:

- Access to finance: this is the key gap that the LEP is currently looking at along with the British Business Bank.
- BAME support:
- EU Exit Business Support
- Incremental Innovation / Adoption of new technology
- Social enterprise support
- Start-up

SE added that the Chamber was running a series of events around access to finance and that the Chamber had submitted papers to the local authorities about their ability and desire to deliver start-up support in the area. AR agreed but noted that there were no funds at present to deliver this support.

LMJ added that incremental innovation could include international trade. She added that there was current funding for businesses to access free training on exporting.

HH added that there is a social enterprise programme at present, on the back of that there is work ongoing into how social enterprise support could be continued.

4 Update on Growth Hub

David Hynd presented to the group. **David Hynd to circulate dashboard to group.**

He acknowledged that there had been recent positive changes as interest in covid-19 related enquiries were levelling off, with start-up enquiries increasing along with an increase in a broader range of enquiries. Demand for

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business support has of course focused on access to finance and investor readiness. Employment and skills have also been flagged as a key area of concern for businesses.

Engagement with the Growth Hub has been high, particularly in relation to the Kickstarter Grants. It is expected that the coming weeks should see those businesses who have been engaged progressing to a stage where they can take up some of the offered business support.

Some of the engagement statistics showed the profile of businesses engaging with the Growth Hub. AR queried why manufacturing might be the top sector for engagement in the Growth Hub when it might be expected that tourism and hospitality etc. would be worst affected. **DH to send through the engagement statistics.**

Looking forward the GH will dig deeper into the businesses that are engaging and looking at how they might be best matched with the current provision.

RS offered congratulations and appreciation to the team for working through such challenging conditions.

5 HotSW Inward Investment Programme

CM outlined how the scheme had been launched on the 27th of August and been distributed across the networks. To date there have been 12 businesses who have approached the programme (3 of which are ineligible). 2 businesses are now at full application stage and they should be ready for approval at the next BLG meeting in December.

CM outlined the scheme process, starting with initial conversation with the LEP Inward Investment Manager the business (if eligible) will then complete a pre-intervention questionnaire, which, once approved, will lead to a full application. Upon completion, this will be returned to SCC who will carry out a completeness compliance check, the application will then be passed to the DR Company who will then undertake a technical appraisal. It is at this stage that the summary will be sent to the BLG who will either grant approval, defer for further information, or decline.

This approval must be based upon:

- The strategic case
- The economic case
- The commercial case
- The financial case
- The management case
- Job creation

There are specific terms of reference for the Business Leadership Group and these have been attached as an appendix to the overall terms of reference.

JB added that there would be an additional BLG meeting in December to approve these businesses. Details would be circulated.

6 Covid-19 Response

In addition to supporting the work of the Growth Hub and the local authorities in their short and medium-term activities the LEP is supporting longer-term activity by setting out the case for investment in the HotSW, particularly in relation to the Comprehensive Spending Review, to government. In addition to this, a paper is being worked on in government which looks at local growth and further devolution.

HotSW will publish the Local Industrial Strategy in the coming weeks and a 'glossy' titled *Building Back Better* which outlines the key investment priorities.

The LEP is in the process of publishing various sector plans which targets those sectors that will be worst hit from the Covid-19 pandemic.

RS noted that much effort had gone into the LIS and was keen that this work not be wasted.

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7. Brexit

Brexit continues to come closer, yet there remains a lack of clarity NS agreed, adding that the conversation had stopped.

LMJ noted that there was merit in changing the message into an opportunity for businesses to access new customers. SW added that it was not on businesses agendas at all.

8. AOBs

HH discussed the Kickstarter grant which had thus far received 314 grant letters in 1st round. HH acknowledged that there had been IT issues, and so there had been delays in responding to all businesses. 2nd round will begin once all round 1 grants had been processed. Everyone from both rounds will know by the 26th of October. There were over 1000 applications over 4 days.

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