

**Business Leadership Group
July 7th, 2021
Microsoft Teams Meeting**

Present

Stuart Elford (SE) – Chairman / Devon & Plymouth Chamber of Commerce

David Ralph (DR) – HotSW LEP Chief Executive

Alistair Handyside (AH) - Tourism Alliance

Noel Stevens (NS) – ESIF Committee Representative / Business Representative
(Alder King)

Stewart Horne (SH) – Business Support Representative (Business Information Point)

Dolores Riordan (DRi) – Local Authority (Devon County Council)

Katriona Lovelock (KL) – Local Authority (Somerset County Council)

Jason Buck (JaB) – Local Authority (Torbay Development Agency)

Chris Wardman (CW) – Marine & Defence Lead (Thales)

Dirk Rohwedder (DRo) – Inclusive Growth Lead (Dartington Trust)

Adam Chambers (AC) – Business Representative (Smart Outcomes Limited)

Sue Wilkinson (SW) – Business Body Representative (Federation of Small
Businesses)

Paul Bird (PB) – Digital Lead (Elixel)

Julie Hawker (JH) – SWBC Representative

Supporting Officers

Colin Bettison (CB) – Local Authority (Plymouth City Council)

Julia Blaschke (JuB) – Local Authority (Plymouth City Council)

Hadelzein Elobeid (HE) – Local Authority (Plymouth City Council)

Carla Modley (CM) – HotSW LEP Inward Investment Manager

David Hynd (DH) – HotSW LEP Growth Hub Manager (Devon County Council)

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Katherine Coby (KC) – Growth Support Programme Manager (Devon County Council)

Vince Mcconville (VM) – HotSW LEP Digital Futures Sector Lead

Emma Buckman (EB) – Buckman Associates and Southern Horizons

Apologies

Richard Stevens (RS) - Chairman / LEP Board member / Business Representative (Citybus)

Amanda Ratsey (AR) – Business Theme Lead / Local Authority (Plymouth City Council)

Philip Mitchell (PM) – Photonics Lead (Lumentum)

Steve Warren Brown – Business Representative (YSL Landscapes)

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1	Introductions, Apologies and Conflicts of Interest
	<p>Introductions and apologies were made (please see above)</p> <p>Conflict of interest was declared by: SE, JH, DRi, KL and DRo</p>
2	Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising
	Previous minutes were circulated and agreed without any matters arising
3	BEIS Annual Report Overview
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CB provided an overview of the Growth Hub annual report, which covered the period between April 2020 and March 2021. ○ CB explained that a BEIS template report is usually completed by October then a more comprehensive report is completed towards the end of the year covering funding schedules(such as Schedule One about spend and budget, and Schedule Three about activities delivered). ○ The report also reflects how LEP and Growth Hub comply with certain themes that BEIS are interested in, such as strategic partnerships and it dwells upon the key performance indicators covering the core Growth Hub Funding. ○ CB mentioned that last year the Chancellor announced an additional funding COVID 19, levelling up and EU transition whose progress is reflected upon in the report. There was not anything specific about Peer Networks however- as a different part of BEIS delivers it. ○ CB gave a recount of the report contents: ○ Delivery: the end of a 4-year Growth Hub delivery contract with Serco and the board's decision to "bring the Growth Hub home" with Devon County Council delivering services since end of February 2020. This came in with the challenge of COVID 19, mobilization and recruitment of staff. Key advantage was that the team from Devon County Council responsible for Growth Hub delivery sits within the council's business support and innovation team, ○ Growth Hubs are access points to business support through triage, signposting and diagnostics. They connect with local, regional and national business support services and use a tiered approach. CB said that it's worth mentioning that another advantage of the

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	<p>Growth Hub coming home is the match funding allocation of the European Regional Development Programme which meant additional money and support- eligible businesses receive 12 hours of business support now.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Growth Hub also supports businesses not eligible for the European support. ○ The team consists of 3 advisors with the project manager, marketing officer and project officer,, ○ Strategic Partnerships are another ask of the report, which are about new creative relationships, networks and such sort of activities. Last year witnessed 5 strategic partnerships: ○ Maritime UK South West ○ HotSW Digital Skills Partnership ○ Nuclear South West ○ HotSW Defence Cluster ○ Quarterly Business Bulletin ○ Other things covered by the report include understanding Simplification; the roles LEP took to simplify business support across it geography (Growth Hub produces an annual mapping report setting the nature of received inquiries, made referrals, as well as to explain and identify provision gaps and duplication) <p>Online Tools used by the Growth Hub includes cobra factsheets, Grantfinder, and an online platform that allows for access to database of companies giving insight to high growth businesses and, which also has a COVID 19 tracker.</p> <p>Wider Activities: the Peer Network Programme continues. Growth Hub also worked with ERDF to run the Kick Start Grant. Finally, HotSW was one of the top 5 areas for the ASBA- launched last year by Amazon in conjunction with Enterprise Nation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Customer Satisfaction: two questions measures to report: ○ How satisfied with the services provided- 82% were satisfied, ○ Would they recommend to a colleague/ friend- 79% said they would. <p>When compared to previous year (2019/20); figures did go down: 82% was 94% and 79% was 91%. Reasons for this drop are sample size are vastly different for example- smaller samples. There might be other factors at play.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Put together what was to be done with Supplementary Funding- was written in June/July 2020 with the thought that lockdown would end in September. Plans were hence revisited through the year. The fund enabled Growth Hub to achieve a number of strands including
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additional capacity within the growth hub- more frontline staff were able to run 1 2 1 digital support and also to work across different sectors for examples. Money was also used to bring SFEDI accreditation for each of the Growth Hub advisors to ensure quality and finally to help businesses access FSB and Chamber of Commerce (session on the latter is available on its YouTube channel) ,

- An additional piece was also done on activities of **EU transition**- mainly around mobilization of additional resources, inform businesses about what support is available. For example, 3,000 businesses were successfully contacted and 9.5 FTEs were mobilized,
- Lessons learned from last year included moving on to online delivery despite it being a challenge, increased productivity with less travel, the challenge of emotional attachment of advisors to struggling businesses, efficient commissioning of the accountable body,

Comments following the update:

- SE asked CB if growth hubs around the country are all called growth hubs and if that what BEIS wants and CB answered Yes to both questions adding that each LEP has a growth hub, so there are 38 growth hubs across the across England- all focusing on bringing support to local businesses,
- SE added two questions: if there is any data on customer satisfaction (if it's going up or down and on how this compares to other growth hubs. CB answered the second question by saying he had no idea how it compares to the other growth hubs and he then said that slide 7 draws on a comparison from last year,
KL added that they dealt with larger samples last year and asked CB how the sample size was achieved because she witnessed a confusion in frequency. CB answered that in the previous year the sample was collected as they went along, while this year the sample was collected at the end. KL seconded that from her own experience of customer service and added that in an extraordinary year when the magnitude of work that was being processed was ongoing that might not necessarily have been a priority in an earlier and more pressured part of the year,
SE also said that everyone was struggling to get any survey responses.
- PB agreed with SE's points that learning from other Growth Hubs will save time in measuring the successes and help to improve the user experience.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SE wondered about the future of the Growth Hub following the review and whether we expect laps to still deliver growth hub business support after that report. DR answered that all the discussion the moment is that Growth Hubs will continue- he said that BEIS are putting in a proposal to CSR to continue growth hubs (a 3-year bid), DR mentioned the need to understand whether the lower customer satisfaction is an issue or not. He also mentioned that delivering less intensive support affected KPIs. DR requested a second review of the KPIs' slide where JuB explained that DH covered in April (figures' update) and that KPIs are something they are looking into and working on with Devon County Council (both accounts: KPIs and customer satisfaction). CB explained that in terms of the KPIs, the figures in brackets of the figures from the previous year which are combined of what the growth has delivered with what the gross support program and what the scale up support is also delivering. Following the KPIs discussion, DR inquired about the "numbers contracted to deliver by BEIS. CB answered that BEIS don't set any- i.e. there are no contracted numbers. However, there is an intention to get an understanding from BEIS in terms of performance. DR commented on the "massive difference of the use of the website". He said that he wanted to know more about the frequency, purpose and actual use of the website. DRi commented that the much more people relying on using the website now- making it a hit. However, more needs to be done so that people can get what they want. She added that they received very good feedback on the website training and meetings. DRi elaborated that they had hundreds of people attending webinars with training sessions and a following discussion from the food and hospitality businesses (almost 600).
4	Growth Hub and Business Support Mapping & Evaluation Study- Progress Report
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EB introduced herself and her work and extended her colleague's apologies then she started explaining what they were asked to do: Evaluation of the HotSW Growth Hub- on track and will be covered in this presentation, Evaluation of HotSW Supplementary Funding and Scale-up Pilot- finalizing report, Mapping Business Support Landscape and Recommendations on Future Delivery- on track though behind others, aim is to finish by end of July.

- A database of business support provision is produced and sent off to partners and business support providers to validate their entries, capturing demand and stakeholders' perspectives and also looking at best practices both locally and internationally,
- EB explained that they are in the process of "bringing it all together" then she went on to explain methodology and how it was done (illustrated in slide 3 of the attached presentation).
- EB explained the approach of evaluation where JuB approached them for an evaluation study in comparison to the 2019 one which they could do to an extent and quite cautiously because of 2020 being an exceptional year,
- EB went on to explain the different parts of the report in details- which are well-depicted in the PowerPoint Presentation.
- EB concluded the presentation saying that the Growth Hub service performed well in challenging circumstances- achieving its engagement and referral targets but under-achieving its intensive support, reasonable levels of customer satisfaction through light touch engagement. She also mentioned some room for improvement such as the website and a review of referrals and signposting (capture),
- EB finally drew conclusions on the scale-up pilot which she described as effective, of low unit costs and high return on investment and good customer satisfaction. They provided 3 recommendations for a way forward.

Comments following the update:

- SE commented that an action point arising from this study would be comparing the Growth Hub with others for perhaps identifying best practices and how to share them,
- DR asked if there were any sector break down of who is engaged with the Growth Hub and EB affirmed and mentioned that it will be present in the main report. She said that it was broadly consistent although there was a higher proportion of the tourism and hospitality businesses.
- SE asked if the final report will be circulated to BLG and JuB answered that it will,
- DRo asked EB whether there are any stats of using the hub services by the social economy/social enterprise sector and how this mapping exercise will go about these, and EB answered that she will need to have a thorough and detailed look about that,
- JuB commented that BEIS have commissioned a national evaluation of Growth Hubs, which is currently underway. This should give some indications on how we are performing comparatively,

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SE seconded DR's comment about being careful to compare- sharing the Chamber's benchmarking exercise experience, AC talked about the social enterprise referrals and the Growth Hub comparisons to include website interactivity. <p>Actions, suggestions and recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EB suggested coming back to the next meeting to discuss findings
5	LEP Digital Opportunity Overview
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VM gave a brief description about two themes he is now working on as part of the LEP's digital opportunity: The Agri-Tech proposition- drawn out of the LIS to build back a better plan for agri- tech use, improving productivity and reducing carbon, this proposition involves working with various partners including universities and farmers representation groups and the tech sector, The second theme VM is currently working on is the development of a Digital Business Support preposition (stemming from elements of the digital strategy and the LIS) which involved looking at all the LEP websites across the UK to analyse what they provide with regards to the digital element. <p>Comments following the update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SH talked about the Sustainable Farming Incentive (first tier of the ELM's support from Defra) which encourages farmers to take advantage of Agri- Tech at the advanced level but there is need to show the farmers how these techniques will improve productivity, at the moment the majority see it as a barrier, JB asked if VM is linked in with SW Agri- Tech and Jo Rufus in Dorset. VM answered both that he is aware about the incentive and in contact with SW Agri-Tech, SE drew on his observation that businesses that recently embraced digital ways of working performed better. SE prepared a paper on how to take businesses to perform digitally but unfortunately funding is still lacking- however if it works he'd be happy to bring it back to BLG,

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6	Growth Support Programme Board and Service for All Update
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ DH provided an update of the Growth Hub Service for All; explaining that it's a combination of two primary contracts from government- from BEIS directly which feeds into the Growth Hub's wider "eco-system". This year an ERDF funding has been added, ○ DH then went into detailed description of the projects which is extensively discussed in the PowerPoint presentation attached, <p>Comments following the update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SE talked about the successful collaboration between the Growth Hub and the Chamber and how the pandemic helped such efficient public- private partnerships,
7	ERDF Inward Investment and Trade Programme Update
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CM gave a quick update on the ERDF grant scheme. She mentioned that the board has awarded three grants to date. The first business has now purchased machinery and created 6 new jobs- now 6 months working on that, ○ The other two projects including Effect Photonics are progressing and moving forward, ○ The second round is now launched with quite lots of interest- already in communication with 5 businesses and expecting more, ○ A witnessed shortage of Somerset businesses applying- might be due to their parent companies being very large and not hitting the SME category, ○ CM asked members' thoughts on the £75,000 marketing budget- £40,000 of which has been roughly signed towards match funding events with partners around the area and has currently received a proposal- looking to promote photonics in the area and the wider HotSW. This business is requesting a total of £7,100 for which CM is seeking approval of the group, ○ CM also provided an update on the grants' scheme with two High Potential Opportunities (HPOs) in phase two- the marine autonomy launched last week internally across DIT, CM will share with the group once live on the website. External launch will be in London in September. ○ The smart and sustainable aviation HPO is slightly behind with the launch hopefully in September jointly with the West of England,

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CM is working on new sector prepositions for HotSW. The aims of these are to raise awareness of strength with DIT, to build relations with their sector teams and to get promotion internationally- looking at food production, health tech and large scale advanced manufacturing. CM is starting with food production and has approached the group to share contacts of businesses, <p>Comments following the update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ DR explained that HPO is a DIT recognised and supported inward investment global tool – and that HotSW has 3: marine, photonics and aviation ○ JuB asked about the marketing budget and whether it makes sense to focus it on HPOs and CM said that she already spoke to Sheldon bearing in mind that DIT has a budget for that already, ○ JB asked how long the support will be available and whether there are other companies applying for the HPO funding and how much is left. CM said that there is below £600,000 but they have put in a request for further funding. Deadlines are probably in September next year for applications to come in, ○ CW asked about the availability of HPO plan of success and whether there is a similar marine context proposition to the marketing budget. CM answered yes to the second question and in answer to the first, there is a process of working closely with DIT to make sure its easy for businesses to locate here- CM is the lead contact. <p>Actions, suggestions and recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To circulate the proposal among the group for a full understanding then approval with a deadline to come back to CM
8	AOBs
	<p>DR requested feedback on close down of Furlough</p> <p>JuB suggested bringing Free Zone to the next BLG</p> <p><i>Next Meeting: October, 06</i></p>