

**Confirmed Minutes of SEMLEP's Growth Hub Board Meeting  
10<sup>th</sup> April 2024 -12:00pm – 2:00pm  
Via Teams**

**Attendees:**

Rachel Mallows, Chair and SEMLEP Private Sector Board Member  
 David Sheridan, Deputy Chair and SEMLEP Private Sector Board Member  
 Ruth Roan, SEMLEP Growth Hub Manager  
 Patrick Kitson – Growth Hub Marketing Lead  
 Debbie Poole-Hunt, Luton Borough Council  
 Louise Seymour – West Northamptonshire Council  
 Anna Bosworth - Central Bedfordshire council  
 Helen Miller, University of Northampton  
 Justine Ives, Bedford Borough Council  
 Jennifer Thomas, FSB

**Apologies:**

Darren Lambert, Accountable body Luton  
 David Bailey, SEMLEP Private Sector Board Member  
 Justin Richardson, Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce  
 Vicky Hlomuka – West Northamptonshire Council

	<b>Item</b>	<b>Actions</b>
1.	<p><b>Welcome and Introductions</b></p> <p>RM welcomed everyone to the online meeting and introductions were made.                      Key discussion was around the update on SEMLEP, the transition to West Northamptonshire council and the Growth Hub Board priorities and purpose.</p> <p><b>Update on the Transition – Louise Seymour</b></p> <p>LS commented on the induction day and meeting the Growth and Careers Hub team. She mentioned there is still a lot to do in terms of setting up a business board and once that governance structure was in place, a joint committee of the local authorities will be formed, replacing the Area Growth Board over the next few months.                      Though last minute, there has been confirmation from the government for funding for the growth hub going forward and the Growth Hub work will continue as it did before with WNC being the host organization. With VH and LS providing support and the leadership required.</p> <p>RM: Thanked LS for attending the meeting and demonstrating her commitment to the Growth Hub as a region wide initiative, serving all 6 local authorities and the importance of the Growth Hub Board in the interim until the Business Board was set up.</p>	

	Item	Actions
	RR: Agreed with RM and added that, her key priority as a Growth Manager was to have this board of expertise to support it, in its role over the next 12 months.	
2.	<p><b>Declarations of Interest</b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest to share.</p>	
3.	<p><b>Minutes of meeting held on 28th February 2024</b></p> <p>There were no amendments to the previous minutes.</p>	
4.	<p><b>Marketing of the Services</b></p> <p>RM: informed the board about inviting team members of the Growth Hub to update the board. Patrick Kitston the Marketing Lead for the Growth Hub updated the board today.</p> <p>Slide set circulated. Refer to the full details within</p> <p><b>Comments:</b></p> <p>DPH: From previous business surveys carried out, lots of businesses in Luton said they haven't heard of the Growth Hub and iterated the importance of changing this narrative significantly moving forwards. Luton Council would try to promote the Growth Hub as well, but it was really interesting that lots of businesses had feedback that they didn't know about it.</p> <p>AB: Suggested sharing the marketing strategies with all the local authorities, to ensure that it was embedded within their marketing strategies so that they could be coordinated with the Growth Hub. She also mentioned there's a lot of messaging going out to businesses from a range of partners and thinks trying to coordinate that as best as possible. She added, having a data sharing agreement in place and having a CRM system that works across the area to avoid bombarding the same businesses with the same messages.</p> <p>RR: Agreed with AB on a data sharing agreement and a CRM across the local authorities. She also added that, regarding linking everyone to the marketing strategy, the Growth Hub team was having conversations with the communications team at WNC to set up a Communications group across the six local authorities to ensure that that messaging is coordinated</p> <p>HM Inquired what the new brand going to be? because from experience, it takes a lot to get these brands having traction. She also mentioned the that, the impact brand change would have on business awareness.</p>	

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	<p>LS: Informed the board, this was currently being discussed with the 6 local authority leaders. There have been no agreement yet and will not be surprised if it remains Southeast Midlands. In the interim, Southeast Midlands is being used.</p> <p>HM: Mentioned that, there are broader concerns about role of boards such as this and the voice of private sector. She was concerned the role of the board to guide and influence will be kept on the periphery. She recognized the shift in accountability in the role of local authorities but added there was a danger of crowding out private sector providers who are as much a part of the delivery of support and engagement and the need to be cautious about communications and engagement with business support and providers outside of the local authority circle.</p> <p>LS: Informed the board, the Growth board as well the Joint committee, will be established within the next three months and would provide the governance needed in the future. However, she expects the Growth Hub Board would continue in a very similar form. She said the focus had been on the TUPE process and trying to get a joint agreement with the other local authorities, so and the next steps will hopefully evolve over the next three months with the board and the branding.</p>	
5.	<p><b>Growth Hub &amp; Careers Hub – Ruth Roan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Careers Hub have a very strict branding rules and cannot change from the Southeast Midlands careers hub which needs to be considered so unfortunately the Careers Hub at the moment do not have strategic leads.</li> <li>• Currently Mandy and Yvonne are doing a tremendous job in leading the team and have had struggles in relation to the transfer of functions with their team and had mileage issues.</li> <li>• The Growth Hub and the Careers Hub work entwined together. Internally, have weekly meetings. to support our teams, to support the activity. There are joint team meetings on a monthly basis where a member of each of the Careers Hub and the Growth Hub run that meeting.</li> <li>• A joint board for the Careers Hub and the Growth Hub would be beneficial</li> </ul> <p>AB: welcomed the joining up and currently having meetings with the Careers Hub and looking at the cornerstone employer groups and trying to proactively support them.</p> <p>HM: Noticed from the organogram, Paul Thompson migrated across to WNC but not clear how that fits in with that broader picture, because careers is 1 aspect of skills and employability and conscious that there's a broader skills agenda which she thinks this is a good opportunity to combine them.</p>	

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	<p>RR: Potentially Paul Thompson could be the next team member to come and speak with the board to understand the role he's playing to develop strategy with the partners across the region.</p> <p>DS: Agreed with RR and added he had a lot of interest in this area and as a chairman of a multi Academy trust, he was in agreement in the Careers Hub being joint with the Growth Hub as one as there are a lot of areas, where there should be a crossover</p>	
6.	<p><b>Priorities &amp; Role of the Growth Hub board – Ruth Roan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the Growth Hub role and is for the whole of the South, East Midlands with 3 main priorities</li> <li>• Important it continues to provide voice of business in the interim</li> <li>• To be a support guide to the Growth Hub. Created a 2024-2025 strategy plan for the growth hub which will be shared with the board to scrutinize and make recommendations.</li> <li>• Ensuring that we are working and supporting businesses in the entire region and ultimately building partnerships to deliver the support.</li> </ul> <p>She added the Growth Hub was evolving and changing and needed support and guidance as it was very disappointing regarding the statistics on the fact that people didn't know who the Growth Hub was. She highlighted that, a lot of people access the service but don't realise the support was being provided by the Growth Hub and needed to work hard on awareness and the need to have more representation from businesses within this Board.</p> <p>AB: Inquired if there could only have one business board or could there be multiple across the geography and if that was being looked at?</p> <p>RM: On the paper, its one that feeds into the joint authority.</p> <p>HM iterated the need to keep at the forefront of priorities, voicing out to government where there's a shortage of support, either through the Central Business board at a localized level or trying to encourage other partners to work with the Growth Hub on where there's key gaps around the business support provision and the areas where action is needed.</p> <p>RR suggested having business representation on the board by creating business groups in the geographical area and having representation from these business boards sit on the Growth Hub board.</p> <p>DS Added that businesses are fed up with business boards consulting them, then nothing happens . They are only willing to engage if it's</p>	

	Item	Actions
	<p>actually going to have some influence, especially now the setup is run by local governments</p> <p>JT agreed with DS saying, creating groups which don't have influence, was pointless, however getting feedback and insights from businesses was important as the business voice should be prioritized from the beginning in decision making rather than lobbying to change decisions.</p> <p>RR highlighted it was a priority the Growth Hub for this board to have people that can go back and influence decisions as the Growth Hub was not consulted when decisions are being made at the top.</p> <p>RM iterated the need for the Growth Hub board to be effective and impactful and a board that's representative, becomes a voice, more appealing to then engage with and help in that process.</p>	
7.	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>In the absence of AOB, RM thanked everyone for attending Next meeting</p>	

Confirmed