

South Midlands Growth Hub Board Meeting

9 June 2025, 12.00 – 13.30

Notes

Item	Item
1.	Welcome and Introductions Welcome and apologies were noted.
2.	Notes of the Previous Meeting No comments or questions, the minutes were approved.
3.	Growth Hub Update It was agreed that slides are preferred over a written paper and should be shared in advance going forward. <i>Discussion:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR processes within the team are ongoing; an update will be provided when appropriate. • Thanks were extended to the Growth Hub team for their adaptability following the transfer and their continued commitment to service delivery and business support. • Poor output figures in Luton were noted, though it was acknowledged this is not due to lack of effort. The new Business Adviser has engaged well with the LBC team, and they are jointly exploring new and creative engagement strategies. • Additional local projects (UKSPF) do not affect DBT targets or delivery but may influence overall planning and integrated support programmes. • There is a clear focus on ensuring the South Midlands is fully covered and supported in both the last and current financial years. It was agreed that efforts should be made to dispel concerns about regional favouritism. • A discussion was held on the membership costing model, with reference to comparable models in other regions. A sub-working group will be formed to explore this further. • The need to explore commercialisation opportunities was discussed.
4.	Grants Proposal Action for the slides to be shared. <i>Discussion:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggested leveraging opportunities for businesses to engage with other regional programmes, such as Get Britain Working, and linking these to the broader strategic context. • It was noted that the programme will launch later in the year due to partners prioritising the rollout of UKSPF grants, which are operating on a tighter timescale. • Agreed to strike a balance between financial responsibility with public funds and ensuring a user-friendly application process for businesses. • A request was made for a promotional toolkit to support communications at the time of launch. • Noted the legacy requirement from the LGF programme, with a warning that failure to spend on a capital programme could result in funds being withdrawn from the region. • The Business Board expressed support for the programme, offering feedback on the administration process and options for private sector match funding. Grants proposal was agreed and endorsed by the Growth Hub Board with full support.
5.	Business Intelligence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David: Cashflow remains a persistent issue for businesses within the sector. • Yvette: Mixed performance reported in Milton Keynes. High street and hospitality businesses continue to face challenges. Recruitment for lower-entry roles remains low and did not improve at the end of the last financial year. Concerns raised over delays in

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	<p>devolution and the likely absence of additional funding. Businesses are still slow to transition from survival to growth; business support remains essential.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anna: Recruitment challenges continue despite new government programmes. UKSPF support continues through existing providers Cranfield University, University of Bedfordshire, Wenta, and the Chamber of Commerce. • Jennifer: A new sustainability report will be shared. A high proportion of calls were primarily related to employment support, with businesses citing cost pressures and staff reductions. Popular downloads of resources include H&S, HR, and staff handbooks. In the spending review, the FSB promoted: Support for small employers with statutory sick pay, Energy grants to reduce costs and emissions, Exclusion of late payers from LIS grants, Targeted support for start-ups and growth • Julie: Currently in a peak period in employer engagement for apprenticeships. • Naomi: Highlighted ongoing financial struggles within the VCSE sector, which continues to operate on a hand-to-mouth basis. • Justine: Noted a universal announcement since the last meeting. The team is currently reviewing UKSPF tenders with outcomes expected soon. • Rizwana (post meeting): Luton economic growth consultation has recently closed but there is still ongoing engagement. The final strategy and Action plan are expected in September. <p>The UKSPF business support programme is in progress with an increased need in support on AI, digital marketing and start up support.</p> <p>Connect to work is expected to start in September with over 1200 people supported over the 5 years in Luton</p> <p><i>Discussion:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team will explore opportunities in the future on business engagement such as local supply chains with regards to Universal Studios - https://www.bedford.gov.uk/business/invest-bedford/home-universal-uk • Action for Ruth to understand local engagement and promotion within the OxCam Corridor and engagement with the Supercluster.
6.	<p>AOB</p> <p>Next meeting is 16 July.</p>

Attendee List:

Name

Anna Bosworth
David Sheridan
Jennifer Thomas
Julie Jeffery
Justine Ives
Naomi Butters
Rachel Mallows
Rizwana Zaman
Ruth Roan
Vicky Hlomuka
Yvette Lamidey
Emma Panter

Apologies:

Helen Miller
Louise Wall
Pim Van Baarsen

Organisation

Central Bedfordshire Council
Europa Components
FSB
MK College
Bedford Borough Council
Icena, Business Board Lead
The Mallows Company, Chair
Luton Borough Council
South Midlands Growth Hub
West Northamptonshire Council
FSB
South Midlands Growth Hub (Notetaking)

University of Northampton
Northamptonshire and MK Chamber of Commerce
Silverstone