

**Hull & East Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership  
Business Support Board**

Held on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024 2.00 pm – 4.00 pm at the Beverley Enterprise Centre

**Paper H - Appendix 1**

DH welcomed all members to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Jason Speedy and Dafydd Williams

Minutes from the previous meeting, held 10<sup>th</sup> January were agreed as correct with all matters arising addressed on this agenda.

**LEP Update - devolution and integration**

James Newman OBE, Chair of the LEP, updated the Board regarding the LEP. The LEP will close on 31st March 2024, however many activities will continue after this, being delivered by the team with most being under contract arrangements. There will be new transition arrangements in place for the team prior to the proposed development of the M/CA. The latter is obviously dependant on the outcome of the public consultation which has reportedly received over 4k responses. Following external and independent analysis each LA will then meet via Cabinets prior to further discussion with government.

If the consultation is positive with both LAs and government agreeing next steps a potential Mayoral election could be held in May 2025.

With regards to the LEP integration, a further meeting with both Councils is planned to discuss the integration and consider how the delivered services and both LAS will work together under the new arrangements, in terms of a new board structure and governance. Recruitment of the board will be open and transparent, and all board and sub board members will be informed of the process.

LEP reserves will be discussed at the 20<sup>th</sup> March Board meeting.

**Growth Hub Report**

JB updated the Board regarding the Growth Hub and that it continues to deliver a suite of business support services in the region.

On the Yorkshire Growth Hub cluster call on 21<sup>st</sup> February, it was advised that DBT would not be able to confirm the Growth Hub funding settlement for the 2024/25 year until after the government's budget statement on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024. DBT will aim to issue letters of comfort as soon as possible after this date.

The Growth Hub Manager is working with LEP and accountable body colleagues to ascertain the implications for LEP integration into Hull City Council from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024. It is currently anticipated that there will be no substantial changes to the Growth Hub's delivery model or service offering;

though this is of course subject to any funding conditions specified by DBT for the 2024/25 year

A revised business support handbook for the HEY region was published in February. This 50-page handbook contains twenty-eight listings of various business support and funding schemes that are currently available for businesses in the HEY sub-region.

The Growth Hub continues to collates business and economic intelligence from across the region to inform a monthly report sent to DBT. Issue remain in terms of access to suitable staffing resources and retention issues, costs increases. JB also reported the difficulties SMEs are facing with operating costs and cashflow pressures.

Further to confirmation of a successful application on 19 October 2023, the HEY Growth Hub team have been working on the various inception actions required to establish the Create Growth Programme.

Unfortunately, due to delays associated with taking receipt of the formal funding documentation from DCMS, the launch of this programme has been further delayed to April 2024. However, the programme has essentially “soft launched” in that 22 EOIs have been received from firms looking to access the programme. The first cohort of firms is still due to commence in late April.

Made Smarter continues to provides wrap around support to manufacturing SMEs to aid their exploration, adoption, and implementation of digital technology, with a view to improving business productivity and competitiveness. HEY Growth Hub’s Made Smarter Digital Transformation Specialist is currently working with a caseload of around forty-four client businesses, each of whom has accessed various strands of the programme including digital roadmap diagnostics, technical support, and capital grant funding.

### **CIPD and HEY LEP Conference**

TC reported on the joint HEY and CIPD conference took place 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024 at the Mercure Hotel, Willerby. This conference was designed for decision makers, whether they were SME employers or HR professionals to consider the positive impact of recruiting and retaining diverse talent. Approx 90 delegates and market place stakeholder participated in the event which was very well received. A further follow up event is planned, likely via Teams.

### **AI conference**

JB updated the Board on the fact that the HEY Growth Hub and LEP Skills Team have jointly developed an ‘AI for SMEs’ mini conference. The mini conference will take place at the Village Hotel, Hull, 8am-12pm on Wednesday 13th March 2024.

Seventy-five delegates are expected to attend the event. The Growth Hub has collaborated with partners from the University of Hull, Hull College, the TEC Partnership and with local industry to produce this event. Keynote speakers will include Dr Dionysios Demetis from the University of Hull Business School, Professor Dhaval Thakker from the University of Hull Computer Science Department, and Debra Gray MBE, Principal of Hull College, amongst many others.

### Local Authority Updates

JD presented an update on behalf of ERYC; the LA has delivered over forty grants given to SMEs to develop a range of business improvements. A programme of workshops is now underway and is developed in partnership with HCC, with businesses from both LAs being able to participate. Most popular attendance in this recent period has been on the use of social media and marketing improvements. Delegates can book onto these workshops 3 months in advance. The business advisors had already dealt with over 950 enquiries this year, six hundred being funding issues.

ERYC's popular and effective Supply Chain Network is being refreshed and potentially renamed.

PB updated on the HCC UKSPF Programme with 80% of finance almost committed; the team are confident that delivery outcomes will be met and any uncommitted spend can be carried over. Any new programme will become the responsibility of the proposed CA, depending on the outcome of the consultation, and required processes.

Business Advisors have dealt with over seven hundred enquiries regarding support on a range of subjects.

In addition to the subjects that JD reported on a range of HR support for SMEs is being launched as well as bid writing and procurement workshops.

The Director of Regeneration interviews are to be held next week. Hull is working on a bid for UNESCO accreditation for creativity and a music event is planned for Princes Quay in the forthcoming weeks.

HCC has received over £20M in Levelling Up funding for a range of capital projects which will include the development of a youth enterprise premises which is planned to start this year. The funding includes a dedicated amount of £1M for a syndicated loan scheme which is being planned for, working with the LEP team.

### Investment related activity

PG updated on the recent briefing published by the NP11 by *Buck Consultants International*, areas of interest included the following:

- 1.1. **Decoupling from China** – 10% of European companies in China are shifting their investments away from the country with a further 14% considering investing elsewhere.
- 1.2. **De-risking supply chains** – Uncertainties and risks have been increasing over a number of years with recent examples being COVID, silicon chip shortages and shipping delays. Drivers for change come internally such as margin pressures and M&A activities, from sector dynamics such as new competitors and demands for sustainability and externally including markets shifts and regulatory changes.
- 1.3. **De-single sourcing** – Businesses are trying to move away from a single or limited supply base with recent natural disasters affecting Chip production facilities a good example of the increased risk.

**1.4. De-centralising production** – 41% of businesses have undertaken on shoring in major European markets over the last 3 years with 52% claiming this was due to finding a cost-effective production location and 51% stating that availability of suppliers in that country played a major role. The top three countries for reshoring to access a European market are Poland, the Czech Republic and Spain/Portugal.

The HEY LEP, through the work of the Business Development Officer, has recently contributed to the creation of an NP11 policy paper on trade and investment. The NP11 Partnership has recently commissioned Cambridge Economics to undertake research to look at the role place-based clusters can have in contributing to the GVA of the economy.

PG then gave an outline regarding the North Bank Freeport Innovation Event. Following the recent event held at the ORE Catapult in Grimsby and the positive feedback received, it has been decided to host a further innovation event on the North Bank for SMEs.

Northern Powergrid (NPG) have recently undertaken their Distribution Energy Futures Scenarios (DEFS) planning. As a District Network operator, NPG are responsible for powering over 3.9m homes and businesses across the North East, Yorkshire, and Northern Lincolnshire.

Carbon Literacy training courses are being rolled out for elected members and senior officers at HCC and ERYC to ensure climate change mitigation and adaptation is included in project development and decision making.

### **Chairs Summary**

DH thanked Board members for their work on the Board and for the knowledge, advice and experience shared in driving the work of the HEY Economic Strategy and, in particular, the Growth Hub delivery. As JHN had shared, members will be kept updated on the board developments under the transition arrangements asap.

DH reflected on his personal contributions and learning via the Board, which has had significant impact on his business use of AI and its possibilities in terms of productivity and innovation.

### **AOB**

TC raise that the LEP Careers Hub, led by Fiona Headridge was invited to attend House of Lords and won a Careers and Enterprise Company award for 'Building Future Skills.' TC said that this work is significantly important to drive aspiration of our young people who are the future workforce of the region. Many employers are engaged and work with schools and colleges to develop careers activity that raises the understanding and connectivity to future jobs.

TC added her personal thanks to Board members.