

Brighton & Hove Economic Growth Partnership - Board

Board Meeting

Thursday 3 April 2025

5-7pm, Council Chamber, Hove Town Hall

Name of Chair	Dean Orgill
Attendees	Gavin Stewart (Brilliant Brighton BID); Sarah Springford (Brighton Chamber); Ana Christie (Sussex Chamber); Vanessa Potter (Sussex Council of Training Providers); Mark Buchanan-Smith (Ingka); Cllr Jacob Taylor (Deputy Leader BHCC); Peter Sharp (BHCC Economic Development); Lisa Lemcke (BHCC Economic Development); Harry Colquhoun-Flannery (MHCLG); Josh Walker (MHCLG).
Apologies	Alison Turner (FSB); Jim May (Sussex Cricket)

Minutes

Item	Discussion Points	Actions
1	<u>Welcome and Introductions</u> DO welcomed all to the meeting and introductions were made. Apologies were noted for Jim May and Alison Turner.	
2	<u>Chair's Communications</u> Key Updates & Actions: Terms of Reference: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Adjustments will be made to reflect the role of the Executive Committee.Inclusion of references to export trade as part of our broader economic strategy.Development of a clear work plan to align our objectives with the Economic Plan actions.Discussion on the Board's title concluded with broad agreement that "Partnership" is more inclusive than "Board." Role of Executive Director & Funding: <ul style="list-style-type: none">The job description has been approved, incorporating a reference to inward investment.Funding remains a challenge, and discussions on securing sustainable financial support will continue.Efforts will be made to ensure alignment with broader devolution discussions to position EGP for long-term success. Governance: <ul style="list-style-type: none">A formal report will be submitted to BHCC Cabinet on 20 March to designate the Board as an official outside body. Board Recruitment: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Agreement reached on maintaining Dean Orgill as Chair for the initial one-year term.	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fixed appointees and open recruitment strategy discussed, aiming for a diverse and representative Board. Recruitment materials will be finalized and circulated for sign-off. <p>Communications & Web Presence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The preferred approach is to retain and evolve the existing BHEP website, leveraging its current reach and subscriber base. A communications plan is in development to support Board engagement and recruitment efforts. <p>Next Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dates for the next meeting are being finalized, targeting late March/early April. Further discussions on funding, recruitment, and governance will continue as we move toward formal establishment of the Partnership. <p>DO thanked the group for their dedication and contributions as we build a strong foundation for the Economic Growth Partnership.</p>	
3	<p><u>Minutes of Last Meeting</u></p> <p>Good progress made with key actions from the Shadow Board meeting. One remaining query concerned the web presence for the Growth Board.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> General preference for this to remain independent from the council. This will help to maximise business engagement. PS proposed existing Growth Hub website, as it is already being used as a 'one stop shop' for business support and there is no additional cost given limited budgets. Agreement to review in line with comms plan. 	<p>PS/GS – meet with BHCC Comms team to discuss strategy for PR/comms and to include website in discussions.</p>
4	<p><u>Declarations of Conflicts of Interest</u></p> <p>No conflicts of interest were declared.</p>	<p>PS – draft a Conflict of Interest declaration form for board members to sign</p>
5	<p><u>Devolution Update</u></p> <p>JW gave a presentation on the consultation for the proposed Sussex and Brighton MCCA and encouraged all present to promote the consultation to their networks, prior to its closing on 13 April.</p>	<p>All – promote MHCLG devolution consultation</p>
6	<p><u>Round Table Sector Feedback</u></p> <p><i>Retail Sector – MBS:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sector had a slow December, Jan was ok and Feb showed a slight improvement. Footfall similar. Business rates continue to be a challenge, especially with increased National Insurance contributions. Crime is an ever-increasing issue. Also issue around online sales. Currently UK average is 30% of total sales online, around double most of mainland Europe. Growth markets are being viewed as '<i>competitive socialising</i>' and '<i>immersive experiences</i>'. 	

	<p><i>Skills/Education – VP:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's a time of enormous change in the education sector and there is some 'change fatigue' as a result. This is despite positive changes such as the formation of Skills England and the proposed Get Britain Working Plans to tackle economic inactivity. • There is a strong skills infrastructure in Sussex and excitement about devolution opportunities / identifying where funded provision can support. <p><i>LSIP/Export/General Business – AC:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sussex Chamber is currently finalising the 'deep dive' insights for the LSIP into specific areas. These are due to be approved by DfE at end May and published end June. Expecting to hear in summer over next 3 years of LSIP funding. • British Chambers held an emergency meeting today regarding the impact of US tariffs and the challenge this poses for UK businesses. More information expected to emerge over coming weeks. • Other challenges reported by businesses include business rates, increased NI contributions, increased minimum wage, along with changes to employment law / HR implications. • There has also been an increase in cyber-crime, which is a challenge for some sectors in particular. <p><i>Service industries – DO:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service sector remains fairly buoyant, but a lot of additional costs are having to be absorbed. This includes NI contributions and the impacts of cyber-crime. • A lot of private equity is being invested into businesses, which is positive although there is an expectation that this investment will realise returns over the longer term. <p><i>Council – JT:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council has agreed to freeze car parking charges for 25/26. Aspiration to try and reduce charges over time, subject to finances. • More resources are being invested into tackling graffiti and street cleansing to improve the look and feel of the city centre. • Particular challenges around New England House were acknowledged, alongside the cost of housing and the aspiration to increase housebuilding through the City Plan. <p><i>General Business – SS:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More data would be useful to enable a better understanding of changing policy on business. Generally speaking city businesses are quite resilient, although there are signs of a lack of confidence and smaller companies / sole traders are closing. 	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding issues are becoming more prominent and more mergers are happening. This has impacted on the number of businesses able to pay the real living wage. <p><i>Business Improvement District – GS:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed with issues highlighted as they are impacting independent city retailers. Vacancy rates are still positive (BID 6.9% and surrounding city centre 9.5%) – still well below national averages. There has been an increase in youth crime and the Business Crime Reduction Partnership is now working with 11 secondary schools in the city to improve reporting etc. 	
7	<p><u>Board Membership Update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PS provided an update on applications for board membership. As of 1pm today (3 April), 25 applications have been received from a wide range of sectors. Deadline for applications is 18 April and a new video went live on social media (thanks to Jim May) to promote further applications. A ‘recruitment panel’ comprising DO, JT and AC is due to meet 12 May to finalise decisions. PS/GS to meet in advance of this to make an initial assessment. 	<p>PS – ensure additional promotion is live and all to promote through networks.</p> <p>PS/GS – arrange time to review all applications.</p>
8	<p><u>Exec Director Update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GS Advised that this is a standing item and will be updated regularly once the full board has agreed the workplan for 2025/26. 	
9	<p><u>Economic Plan Update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PS gave an update on progress (as per paper previously circulated). Good progress has been made with most actions, although external factors have delayed delivery in some instances. A particular highlight has been the success of the Scale Up Brighton & Hove programme run as a pilot between Jan and March 2025. The target was to support 25 businesses, but the programme has successfully supported 32. More outcomes will be reported over coming months as the participating businesses progress their growth plans. 	
10	<p><u>Project Focus – Workshop</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> General agreement that ‘celebrate our city and welcome investment’ should be the initial focus for the Board and would be welcomed by businesses. Wider discussion over how we could map the Economic Plan’s imperatives over to the devolution competences, as well as beginning to identify our ‘bucket list’ that could be developed to share with an incoming Mayor for investment. 	
11	<p><u>AOB</u></p> <p>Nothing specific noted.</p>	