

Brighton & Hove Growth Board

18th September 2025, 5:30pm – 7:30 pm

Elm House, University of Brighton



MINUTES

Attendees:

Dean Orgill
Cllr Jacob Taylor
Mark Buchanan Smith
Sarah Springford
Jessica Sumner
Kevan Smith
Tom Willis
Jo Havers
Mohit Bajaj
Richard Freeman
Victoria King
Gavin Stewart
James May
Peter Sharp
Sam Lucas
Razak Helalat
Ana Christie
Alison Turner
Vanessa Potter
Lisa Lemcke

Mayo Wynne Baxter [Chair]
BHCC
Ingka Group/Churchill Square
Brighton Chamber
Community Works
Brighton United
Shoreham Port
University of Brighton
Simplex Services
Always Possible
Plus Accounting
BHGB/Brighton BID
Sussex Cricket
BHCC
MHCLG
BlackRock Restaurants
Sussex Chambers
FSB
SCTP
BHCC

In attendance:

Lorraine Davies
Tom Cottam
Adam Jones

University of Brighton
BHCC
University of Brighton

1.0 Welcome, Apologies and minutes of last meeting

Gavin Stewart undertook Charing duties at the start of the meeting. GS welcomed everyone to the meeting and the group introduced themselves. No Apologies were noted. The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

2.0 Chairs Communications

No communications were shared.

3.0 Welcome from Help to Grow, University of Brighton

Adam Jones, UoB, gave the following update on Help To Grow. His presentation is appended with these notes.

3.1 Help to Grow Management at Uni of Brighton is:

- 12-week course for business leaders of SMEs
- 90% Government funded. Cost to a business is £750.
- Designed like a mini-MBA.

- Online and in person sessions designed to work around your commitments.
- 50+ hours of professional teaching.
- Free one to one mentoring.
- Opportunity to network with other local businesses.

Special offer for Growth Board Members, their networks and associates – limited number of fully funded places on the Jan 2026 cohort – just mention – ‘Growth Board’

3.2 Opportunities to engage with the University of Brighton as local Businesses

Student & Graduate Engagement : Access fresh talent through placements, internships, and projects to build a recruitment pipeline.

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs) : Embed university expertise and graduates into your business for strategic innovation.

Apprenticeships: Develop your workforce with funded higher and degree apprenticeships co-designed with employers.

Elm House: Joint host business meeting and events

GS thanked AJ.

4.0 Member Engagement Session

4.1 Ice Breaker Session

GS thanked the University of Brighton for hosting the session and welcomed Lorraine Davies, Business Engagement Manager to facilitate a session to:

- Encourage members to get to know each other, and
- Allow the opportunity for members to rate their priorities from the city’s Economic Plan.

In pairs, each member of the group had 1 minute to meet their neighbour and ask the following questions to report back to the group:

- **Name & Role:** What’s your name and your role?
- **Representation:** What area, organisation, or sector they are representing on the Board?
- **Contribution:** How did they see their organisation best contributing to the strategy?
- **One challenge, one opportunity**

Participants then introduced each other to the wider group.

Feedback – particularly focused on challenges - included:

- Communication issues.
- Access to funding.
- Macro-economic climate.
- Social enterprises not always being seen as businesses.
- Wider uncertainty including changing national policies.

4.2 Feedback from the Survey

GS gave some feedback from the recent survey which aimed to gather insights on understanding and prioritise key imperatives that drive local economic development. The questions focused on evaluating the group's comprehension of various core objectives, including digital competitiveness, community involvement, decarbonisation, labour market inclusivity and the promotion of the city as a creative destination.

GS advised that the results indicated a generally moderate to high level of understanding across the core imperatives, particularly in capitalising on digital competitive advantage and building local community involvement. Notably, the imperative to celebrate the city and welcome investment received strong emphasis, reflecting a shared recognition of its importance for economic growth.

However, there are areas that warrant further attention. The understanding of decarbonisation and creating a regenerative economy mission appear to be less robust, suggesting a need for increased education and awareness in this critical area. Additionally, while the responses indicate a commitment to building a stronger, more inclusive labour market, the varying levels of understanding highlight potential knowledge gaps regarding this imperative.

Overall, the survey underscores the necessity for ongoing dialogue and engagement with stakeholders to enhance understanding and drive collective actions towards these core objectives.

GS went on to discuss how the group rated the importance of the imperatives. Although members were in general agreement that all of the imperatives were important, by averaging out the scores, there are three clear areas which the group felt were above the others, these were:

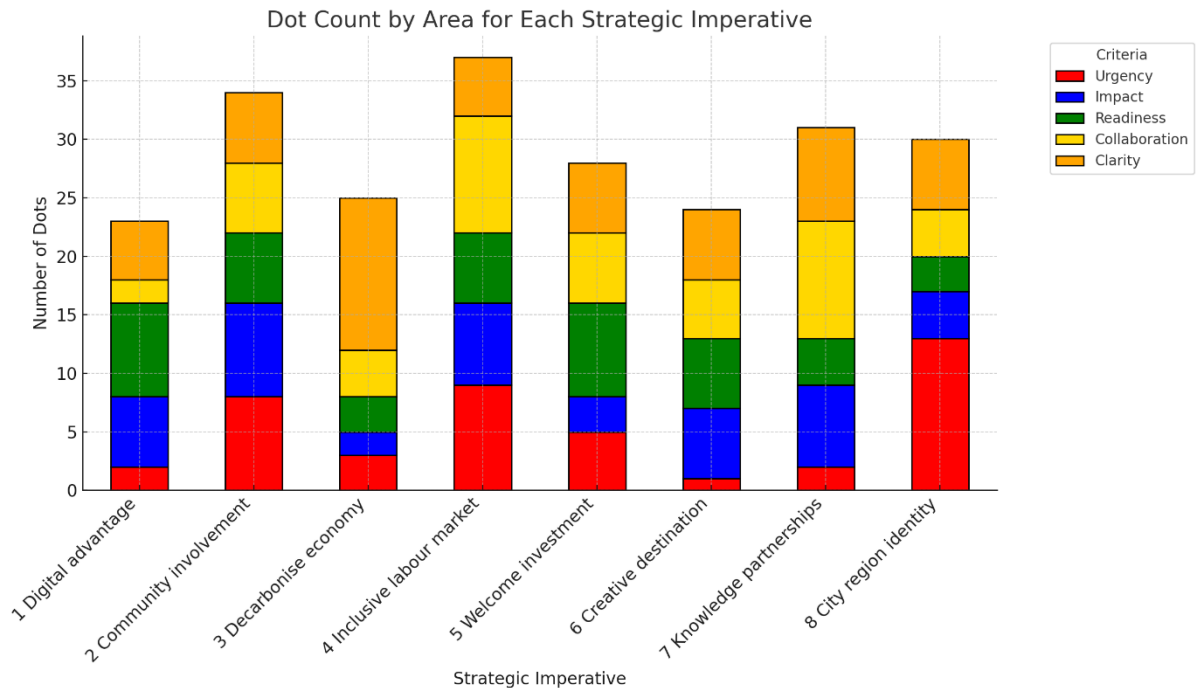
- To build local community involvement as a response to economic inequality
- To create a more inclusive labour market
- To see the city thrive within a region with a clear economic Identity.

4.3 Strategy Prioritisation

Each person was asked to vote by placing coloured dots on the strategic imperative (place card) that best fitted the meaning of each colour:

- Urgency (e.g. red dot): Which of these areas do you believe is most urgent to address in the next 6–12 months?
- Impact: Which area, if progressed, would have the greatest positive impact on the region?
- Readiness: Which area is your organisation or sector most ready to contribute to right now?
- Collaboration Potential: Which area offers the best opportunity for cross-sector collaboration?
- Clarity: Which area feels least clear or needs more discussion before action?

The outcome of the session provided the following data:



- Most total dots: #4 Inclusive Labour Market (37) and #2 Community Involvement (34)
- Highest Urgency: #8 City Region Identity (13)
- Highest Impact: #2 Community Involvement (8)
- Highest Readiness: #1 Digital Advantage & #5 Welcome Investment (8 each)
- Highest Collaboration: #4 Inclusive Labour Market & #7 Knowledge Partnerships (10 each)
- Highest Clarity: #3 Decarbonise Economy (13)

GS advised that the data would be taken away for further research with a view to using it to drive the content of future meetings and strategic thinking.

GS thanked LD for her excellent facilitation and passed the meeting back to Dean Orgill (DO).

5.0 Devolution Workshop

DO invited Cllr Jacob Taylor to take the floor and outline the work around Devolution. CllrJT advised that he was keen to demystify devolution and better help people to understand the process. CllrJT advised that Devo would align more money and power at the local level adding that in the UK significantly more money was managed centrally via government than in the EU (which was more decentralised). CllrJT cited examples of Amsterdam and Copenhagen as cities that have been able to deliver significantly more through devolved powers and funding.

The main areas of focus will be jobs, growth, skills, transport, climate, safety and housing and it is necessary for us as a 'place' to create a priority programme. CllrJT went on to say that through his LGA (Local Government Association) work it is clear that across all of the other Strategic Mayoral Authorities the system works well across party lines, adding that what we need now is a programme that the Mayor can take on. The Growth Board, and wider city needs to establish what we want from the Mayoral Authority.

DO then introduced Tom Cottam, Programme Director for Devolution at BHCC who gave a wide ranging presentation with is appended with these minutes.

TC then asked the board to break into three groups to discuss the following questions:

- What opportunities does devolution offer for economic growth in Brighton and Hove and across the Sussex region?
- What are the enablers and barriers to realising these opportunities?
- How can a new Strategic Authority best engage and involve businesses in the City?

The group Feedback was as follows:

GROUP 1:

GS advised that the group had discussed:

- Free travel for under 25s
- A focus on digital and tech, but crucially not initially Quantum, but:
 - Agri-tech
 - Health-tech
 - Maritime-tech
- The concept of Psychological Safety of communities and creating third spaces to get people collaborating.
- The need to be bold and look at 30-year aspirations around transport, housing and major infrastructure
- Understand that transport is a huge issue as the jobs aren't where the people are
- One of the main barriers is the intra-regional competition that currently exists and the lack of any resource to drive a plan. Another barrier are the large levels of fragmentation and the lack of funding to pull it together.

GROUP 2:

Peter Sharp (PS) advised that the group had discussed:

Opportunities

- Importance of the mayor being a strong advocate for the region to attract funding and influence
- Showcasing/promoting innovation (ie. better recognising the role of our universities in driving higher skills/growth, etc)
- Affordable housing – to retain highly-skilled students and retain young people in the region
- Skills, but importantly also connecting people with training and job opportunities. The point was raised that the opportunities are sometimes there (eg. digital/tech) but young people don't know how to access them and companies don't know how to attract the talent
- Attracting investment to grow key sectors

Enablers

- Transport infrastructure – better and cheaper. If this is resolved, it opens up development opportunities in surrounding areas that can better link to the city's economic growth
- B&H's image – global renown etc.

Barriers

- Lack of space
- Lack of affordable housing
- Transport infrastructure

- Lack of engagement with devolution amongst business community – importance of building understanding of why it matters (Tom Willis gave the excellent example I mentioned re: mayoral candidate recently visiting Shoreham Port).

GROUP 3:

Jess Sumner (JS) advised that the group had discussed:

- Do away with boundaries, free flow of trade
- Housing is pushing people out of the city
- Keep young talent in Brighton, make parts of Sussex more attractive so young talent stays
- Open up pan Sussex infrastructure
- Funding – can we stretch boundaries of allocation, share wider
- Agree priorities from local people, need to meet residents needs e.g. skills, working hours
- Resources for providers need to be brought together
- We need to focus and make decisions now. What is the barrier to making decisions in the interim period.
- BIPC suggested as conduit for support/funding. There are too many hubs now for help for businesses to go to
- Skills - Bradford – one stop shop for skills is a good example
- Sussex has not got a strong economic identity whereas Brighton internationally known. We have opportunity to development economic identity to a wider area (come to Brighton but whilst here go to/see)
- Transport – Need to think more strategically about what is needed at a regional level rather than just within current LA footprint e.g. rural and urban connectivity – supporting young people to remain in communities and address inequality/isolation.
- Skills – opportunity to think about what is required Sussex wide with greater discretion to tailor funding to local need that is based on how people live rather than LA boundaries.
- Economic identity – Opportunity to develop a distinctive identity and vision for the Sussex economy based on strengths e.g. Tech and innovation that will help attract investment.

TC thanked the group for their feedback and advised that the comments would be taken away to help build the strategic direction.

7.0 Declarations of Conflicts of Interest

No declarations were shared.

8.0 Future Events Update

GS advised that the University of Brighton had offered the Sallis Benney Theatre for a future city wide event, hosted by the Growth Board in the new year. GS told the group that he, Sarah Springford from the B&H Chamber and Peter Sharp from the city council had already met to make preliminary plans for an event, however it was clear from the discussion on devolution that using that as a focus would be useful for the wider business networks in the city.

GS advised that more detail would follow.

9.0 AOB

No other business was discussed.

Date and Time of Next Meetings: TBC