**Business Growth Committee**

**Minutes**

**Tuesday 9th March 2021**

**Venue:**

**Microsoft Teams**

* Introduction from Chair – Stephen welcomed the group and gave an overview of the current
* Growth Hub update: - 10 minutes

Kerry Hall joined the meeting and gave a brief presentation on the work of the Growth Hub over the last 12 months. This demonstrated how valuable the team has been in supporting businesses through the pandemic and EU Exit as we transition into recovery. Presentation is attached for information.

The group expressed their thanks to the team for the work done to support businesses.

There have been several external contracts delivered during 2020/21, A request was made for an update on these contracts be presented to the group in June.

* Recovery and Growth strategy

The strategy was circulated for discussion as this will form the basis of our work for the upcoming year.

A strong discussion on how the group can influence this work was had as the strategy will heavily influence the work of the committee for the next 12 months. Key discussion points were:

* The development of a more focussed delivery plan out of the longer in-depth strategy which is currently very long
* Inclusion of a section on mental health
* More information and a focus on decarbonisation and net zero
* A focus on digital and how it fits with recovery.
* Should there be a place in the strategy for the heritage offer and how it can aid recovery?
* Very little information on start up, this should be a focus. In particular high growth starts
* Accelerate update – Andy explained that a conversation with the LEP, University of Chester and DWP had recently taken place. No final decisions have yet been taken on the immediate future of the programme as these discussions continue but there are clearly challenges to overcome in Accelerate.
* Round table on issues raised by committee members.

**Denise Proctor** – Revisit the cultural sector and how it can play a larger part in recovery. Opportunity for a roundtable led by Denise and MC to get some real case studies and intel on these businesses.

**John Downes** – Tenancy has held up well, not seeing businesses failures or a clamour for deferral of rent etc. Property portfolio has performed well and portfolio is increasing with only limited delays. Interest from potential tenants has been better than expected indicating the commercial property market is very strong.

Liverpool freeport was encouraged by government, too early to tell what impact that will have on surrounding areas.

Some concern that too many developments are being called in for public enquiries which is causing significant delays.

**Becky Studdard** – New building at Booths park has now been handed over and fit out is progressing well, looking to open in summer post lockdown. Sector is still growing, and recruitment is progressing. Looking to launch a new product focussed on.

Opportunity to link into rolling out digital connectivity with digital Cheshire and the LEP.

**Ian Paton**– Seeing LA staff getting back to some level of normality and getting back to day jobs and focusing on growth again. Not the end of the story as new grants have been announced but a trajectory is becoming clear.

Immediate focus on reopening and how businesses can be supported working with regulators and public health.

**Stephen Fitzsimons** – Getting the balance right for reopening working with BIDS, challenge will be after reopening and managing demand and expectations. Losses of Debenhams and arcadia stores will have an impact on all high streets.

Intel continues to come in re export issues, concern still remains around irish border and uncertainty that remains.