**Business Growth Committee**

**Agenda**

**Tuesday 10th November 2020, 10am**

**Venue:**

**Microsoft Teams**

Apologies from John Downes

* Introduction from Chair

Stephen asked that Joe Manning chair the meeting as he was in another meeting for the first part of the meeting but did join as soon as was possible. Joe welcomed the group and gave a brief update on how the new format would work with less time taken up with updates and more time for strategic discussion.

It was also announced that Anne Boyd has started a new position at the Manchester Growth Hub and as a result would not be able to continue as a committee member. A note will ne sent to Anne thanking her for her contributions to the committee.

* Growth Hub update:
	+ Grant Programmes

Update was given on the various grant programmes designed to support business through COVID restrictions. Demand has been very high and an up to date report was provided.

Brief discussion on the MIT programme and where it is up to

**Action**: Andy to circulate latest slide deck and information

* + Peer to Peer programme

Procurement has now been complete, and we expect to run at least 11 cohorts supporting at least 100 businesses.

**Action**: Update report at every meeting

* + Accelerate Programme

External review has now commenced with the goal of making recommendations to address the problems the programme is currently facing.

* + EU Transition

BEIS have indicated that funding will be provided to the Growth Hub to fund 2 posts to support businesses through the transition period. This funding has now been confirmed though we await specific confirmation of what it can fund and when it will be available.

* + Restart and Recovery

The restart and recovery plan was circulated. This will form the basis of the LEPs work around economic recovery.

**Action**: All updates to be shared with the committee

* Jobs and Investment programme

A paper was circulated to the committee setting out the process of enhancing the investment activities in Cheshire and Warrington which is currently very reactive. The impact on employment of the COVID pandemic has underlined the need for a more proactive approach to business expansion and investment.

A detailed conversation took place with feedback provided on the initial paper which is summarised below:

* There should be further articulation of sectors within document particularly as each has been impacted differently by COVID
* Specific detail on what these sectors are doing and opportunities, committee members offered to provide specific examples of this
* Set out key needs for account management, clarity of approach and ‘front door’
* Greater link to LEP strategic priorities within the document, currently too broad
* What levers are actually available, what type of impact are we looking at having in removing barriers and what specifically are these barriers?
* What range of enablers can be pulled in, do we have data from businesses that confirm issues businesses and investors are facing?
* Needs further real world examples to add to data and strategy
* Can it incorporate data sharing?
* Should employment data be a factor, a sector spread could be very helpful
* Transport issues and infrastructure should be included
* Proposal should be results focussed and then work backwards for process

**Action**: Andy to draft new version of paper taking into account suggestions, goal is to circulate before December meeting and keep momentum of discussions going

**Action**: Andy and Joe to follow up with individual members on suggestions on specific examples and opportunities to feed into proposal and wider strategies

* All committee members given the opportunity to update the group

**Stephen Fitzsimons** – COVID figures still a concern in Warrington as cases are still going the wrong way. Additional restrictions grant which has been worked out on £20 per head of population, focused on businesses that have been forced to close and the impact this has had on their customers and supply chain will go live in November.

£22m town fund been approved, detail still to be confirmed. An update can be provided at a future meeting

£7.5m grants for businesses being forced to close, should go live on 11th November

**Iain Paton** – COVID Business Grants have taken precedence, programme has been launched with applications now coming in. Approx. 4,000 eligible businesses but many more applications expected. Some funds available until April 2022 but suggestion that this will be done much sooner than that.

**Debbie** **Baker**– companies such as CF and TATA are now looking at potential expansion and investment. Analysis of industries such as chemical which has carried on through COVID and looking at a platform of clean growth and low carbon. This is an opportunity that the LEP can move forward on.

**Becky Stuttard** – Business and sector has been resilient through COVID. Recruitment has continued though more senior talent attraction into Cheshire has proven more difficult as a result of COVID.

**Denise Proctor** – digital sector is a mixed picture as a result of COVID. Game development and content creators performing strongly, though live events and festivals clearly been hit very hard. Greater opportunities within digital sector than suggested by LIS and other strategies which presents potential opportunities

**Stephen Kinsey** – food and DIY retail doing well. Many other retailers forced to close. Discussions ongoing around reform of business rates. Significant pause on office occupation as businesses take stock of current situation. Working patterns clearly changing though still taking shape. Logistics still powering ahead with no signs of slowing down. Housing market at a high point, unclear if this will overheat. Continued strength in life sciences

Next meeting

Tuesday 8th December 10am

Microsoft Teams