	Minutes of Business Environment Subgroup Meeting 9 March 2022

Membership

Name of Member	Organisation	Attendance
Paddy Bradley (PB)	SWLEP CEO	✓
Mandy Clarke (MC)	SWLEP Board Director	Apologies
Tom Marshall (TM)	SWLEP	✓
Alison North (AN)	SWLEP Board Director	✓
Debby Skellern (DS)	SWLEP	Apologies
Chris Stevens (CS)	SWLEP	✓
Prof Ian White (IW)	SWLEP Board Director	✓

Guest(s)	
Chair	Alison North (AN)
Minutes	Deborah House (PB)
Venue	Via video / teleconference call
Start time	2pm
Finish Time	3.45pm

1.0	Welcome and Introductions	Date
	The meeting opened at 2.09pm. The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and apologies were noted.	
2.0	**Minutes and Matters Arising**	
	Minutes from the meeting 17 January 2022 were approved. Matters Arising: • AN to check with FSB to ascertain whether it had already carried out a Living Wage survey. *FSB had commented that it was not on the radar at the moment with everything else that was going on.* **COMPLETED** Other Matters arising were completed.	
3.0	**Business Cyber Centre update**	
	TM presented to the meeting and highlighted the progress of the Business Cyber Centre project. The presentation can be accessed by using the following link.	

https://static.swlep.co.uk/swlep/docs/default-source/sub-groups/business-development/business-environment-subgroup---main-meeting/2022/20220309-swlep-bcc-bes-update-for-website.pdf?sfvrsn=83d5a8c7_4

Budget
There would be another presentation to the Board in the public session to advise on the spend of £3.7m of public money in the project. Arrangements with BEIS were to use freedoms and flexibilities with grant money to enable acceptable allocation of the funding whilst meeting the grant criteria. There was £700,000 of materials still to arrive and be deployed in the building. These costs were in large part made up of furniture and audio-visual equipment.

There had been delays in September 2021 including the signing of the lease, and the situation with global materials and supply, so the project had slipped by four weeks. SWLEP would now take over the building at the end of April.

Swindon and Wiltshire Cyber Cluster
Membership of the existing Cyber Cluster has 195 businesses, plus there were another 85 on Hubspot to be approached. UKC3 had allocated a further £15,000 to support the Swindon and Wiltshire Cyber Cluster.

IW prompted a discussion about the opportunities in the range and skill set of cyber businesses in the area, particularly with ex-military start-ups with communications background, their potential to grow and the strength of the MOD presence plus Zurich and Nationwide which would act as inward investment attractor.

The remit of UKC3 was to register the performance of each cyber cluster, focussing in particular on skills and innovation. Cynam and the South West were more established clusters, whilst the Bristol & Bath Cluster, managed by TechSpark commenced activity a little earlier than our cluster. It was working with Raytheon in schools, particularly to increase interest of girls in the sector. This was also something which the Swindon and Wiltshire Cluster could do as we had the Growth Hub and the skills advisors behind us.

Brea Wood's task was to get the steering group up and running and find speakers that would be of benefit to the cluster. This was a standing remit as part of the application for operating the cluster.

Tenancy
The first tenants were due to take up residence in the first week of May with 19 desk spaces representing 15% of the footprint. Other prospective tenants were waiting on the appointment of contracts before signing up to office space within the BCC.

A suggestion was being made to rent out the top floor conference space and meeting rooms to businesses from any sector. This would increase commercial viability around the top floor and impact the Business Plan. The first booking had

	already been taken from the Careers Hub, which was running a conference for IT and Careers staff within schools about the increasing opportunities for their students within the world of cyber. A paper was being taken to the Board detailing the change to the strategy. The next meeting would see more clarity on the financials, more insights and scenarios. The Project Steering Group on Friday would discuss in further detail. **Action: IW offered to provide a list of cyber companies to pass to TM.**	**May 2022**
4.0	**Growth Hub update**	
	CS spoke to the paper. Key points made were: - the Growth Hub had brokered 96 placements of Kickstarters which had generated £20,000 of income and SWLEP had re-invested the money in an apprenticeship in digital marketing; - Wavehill had delivered the independent evaluation last year and had been commissioned again for this year; - the Growth Hub Impact Report was about to be commissioned again and it would have a different tone from previously in a move away from the reporting through the pandemic; - the Growth Hub helped to co-ordinate the Business Intelligence Report to BEIS which was now produced monthly, and stories were being filtered to BEIS of businesses which were being directly affected by the Ukrainian situation; - the Growth Hub core grant of £462,000 had all been allocated and would be defrayed by 31 March; - the SME Competitiveness programme had been built in a pre-pandemic world and had undergone an intensity of support. The Growth Hub was now aiming to deliver its own workshops which would take the form of a three-hour delivery combined with 1:1 support thereafter. For example, the partnership with Trowbridge Chamber, which was geared deliberately to productive and larger amounts of time with targeted support; - profiling would see light touch support reduced and more intensive support, aligning with SWLEP key objectives and strategy. - there was a need to build a resilient economy, so we needed to consider the size of the business with which we were engaging; needed more businesses progressing in size over the course of years. Government was more focused at the moment on small to medium-sized companies and was shying away from micro businesses; - we did not yet know what the level of funding would be for Growth Hubs; and - pages on the SWLEP and Growth Hub websites were being produced in Ukrainian offering business support.	

	IW commented that he would like to see some analysis of the economic benefit of the support SWLEP was providing, that is, were we spending our money where it was getting the maximum benefit. The discussion which followed identified a range of ways in which the Growth Hub could ascertain such a measure of impact: • research on Companies House for the businesses we had supported would give turnover and profit; and • carry out a pulse survey with businesses to ascertain the level of impact from the situation in Ukraine being felt immediately, the possible impact if the situation were to go on for three months, and then again for six months. We have the facility to carry out such surveys. **Action: Growth Hub to provide information/analysis on the two points above.** **The Business Environment Subgroup:** **NOTED the contents of the report and points of clarification were raised during the session.**	**May 2022**
5.0	**Green skills and green jobs Summary report**	
	PB spoke to the paper which was the report from the Skills & Talent Subgroup meeting of 12 January. The report had also been discussed at the follow-up meeting held yesterday. Comments made were: • the feedback from businesses was that there were skills shortages at degree and higher level and apprenticeship and A-level; • how did you increase young people's knowledge through the school system about the types of jobs available; • for those already in jobs, how did we upskill them and provide increased opportunity; • skills training providers needed to engage with employers to produce relevant courses; • it was anticipated that the largest sector for jobs would be the low carbon generation of electricity; • another significant market would be retraining / upskilling and giving employees green skills in their jobs; and • a Task & Finish Group would be established to produce the plan on how we coordinated elements of support. Members of the group had volunteered, and their work would be taken to the Board Meeting in July. IW was pleased that this level of analysis was being done. His personal feeling was that an Institute of Green Skills could be set up along the lines of the Institute of Coding (IoC) which had been very successful. This collective would produce an	

	efficiency of scale. The Subgroup supported the concept, which PB said would be brought to the attention of the Task & Finish Group. **Action: follow-up after July Board meeting.**	**Aug 2022**
6.0	**Plan for Growth update**	
	PB updated the meeting on the Plan for Growth. There was concern that the Government appeared to be backing away from the language of Plan for Growth. The Plan now needed to be action orientated, carrying forward deliverable projects from the Local Industrial Strategy and setting higher expectations against the Government's priority to reach Net Zero by 2050. We are discussing potential new projects too. DS had been liaising with National Highways about the proposed improvements on the A303 and Stonehenge tunnel and discussions were taking place to use hydrogen-powered vehicles during construction. SWLEP could also help deliver an A303 tourism route from London to the Southwest peninsula, drawing in visitors to increase income for the hospitality sector and provide an exemplar zero carbon route. The Plan would have been brought to the Board in March, but this had now been delayed as LEPs still did not know what their role was going to be. The item would be mentioned in the CEO's report for March, but the Plan was now expected to be taken to the May Board.	
7.0	**Items for the next meeting**	
	• Performance reports on the Business Cyber Centre and the Growth Hub. (TM and CS) • Developing the Business Environment Subgroup's contribution to the Plan for Growth. (PB and DS) • Business opportunities arising from a green economy. (PB) A suggestion was made to move the Growing Places Infrastructure Fund (GPIF) from the Ideas, Infrastructure & Places Subgroup to the Business Environment Subgroup. This may warrant a review of the Terms of Reference. The Chair requested a Forward Work Plan for the Subgroup	
	Date and time of next meeting	
	Next meeting: Future Dates for 2022: Monday, 9 May – 1.30pm to 3.30pm Monday, 4 July – 1.30pm to 3.30pm Monday, 19 September – 1pm to 3pm and Monday, 7 November – 1.30pm to 3.30pm	
	Meeting closed at 3.44pm	

Alison Norty   9 May 2022