



Membership

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

Guest(s)	Suzanne Wigmore ✓
Chair	Alison North (AN)
Minutes	Paddy Bradley (PB)
Venue	Via video / teleconference call
Start time	1pm
Finish Time	3pm

1.0	Welcome and Introductions	Date
	The meeting opened at 1.03pm. The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and apologies were noted.	
2.0	Minutes and Matters Arising	
	<p>Minutes from the meeting 9 November 2021 were approved.</p> <p>Matters Arising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> investigate interactions between businesses and Growth Hub to understand the extent to which business support from the SWLEP had been essential to business survival. (PB in CS's absence.) The item was on the agenda and the link to the Impact Report was given in the paper. The question was raised as to when the report was published. Response: not long after the end of the financial year - July 2021. engage early with stakeholders to understand what current practice may translate into the Plan for Growth. (DS) IW to provide an example from the University of Bath. CARRY FORWARD <p>Other Matters arising were completed.</p>	
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/swlep-bcc-bes-update-170122.pdf?sfvrsn=12106da5_4

The next presentation to the Board would be made in the public session to advise on the spend of £3.7m of public money in the project.

Mobilisation

Progress on refurbishment

The mechanical and electrical fit out was progressing as planned.

Staffing

Recruitment had been a problem for the team SWLEP was looking to build at the BCC. So, it had been decided to use the skills of some of the staff already within the SWLEP team.

- Rachel Staines had previously been on a temporary contact to provide admin support to TM during the mobilisation period. She had now been appointed as the Business Cyber Centre Administrator with effect from 24 January. She had the forward-facing responsibility within the business and would manage a small team of service-led staff, and maintain the contracts for such as the lift, printers, utilities and equipment in the café etc.
- SWLEP had received recognition from UKC3 to operate the cyber cluster for the area on condition that there was a Steering Group for Cyber. The recognition also provided access to some funding of £45,000 for administration and staff. With the ending of the Peer Networks Programme in March 2022, Brea Woods would now come on board as Project Manager for the Business Cyber Centre full time with effect from 1 April 2022. This would allow SWLEP to retain her skill set and experience from Peer Networks and transfer these to the operation of the Cyber Cluster.

Tenants

- The first anticipated tenant was taking the proposal for formal ratification to its Board Meeting at the end of January. A deposit was expected shortly and would mean the company holding a 15% footprint on the middle floor.
- TM was in different levels of conversations with a range of businesses. He was using, as a guide, information about the businesses which had secured contracts with MoD Corsham and was in contact with businesses in priority order of size of existing known contracts.



- SWLEP was also considering Tenancy Brokers as a second strand in discussion.

The question was raised about the tenancy process and what the potential impact was on welcoming a company that might lead others not wanting to be involved because of commercial sensitivity. *In response: SWLEP was aware of these potential situations and was working towards minimising such impact.*

Budget

There was £3.7m of public money from the Getting Building Fund being used in the BCC project and TM outlined the spend to date. Arrangements with BEIS were to use freedoms and flexibilities with grant money and do capital swaps if necessary. SWLEP may use this for a small proportion of money associated with BCC. This provision was available for SWLEP if necessary, but every effort was being made to avoid this.

Clarification was asked for the line “artworks” in the budget. *Response: it was the look and feel inside the building, for example, feature walls, graphic wall papers, and acoustic board to offer soundproofing.*

Action: the title of the row to be changed for greater clarity.

Launch

A launch date for the building was being planned and the date suggested was 10 May and for the event to be held during the day. There were local elections in Swindon this year and purdah was from 24 March to 6 May. The launch attendance would be limited to a selected number of stakeholders.

The meeting agreed in principle to the suggested date of 10 May.

AN advised that TM’s presentation to the Board did not need to include all the operational detail included in the discussion at this Subgroup. Aligning the status of the activities with the overall objectives for the BCC and the SWLEP as well as highlighting successes and risks would be useful.

4.0 Growth Hub update

In CS’s absence, PB spoke to the paper. The Growth Hub was a delivery arm for Government programmes; funds came in and funds went out and so there was no excess income generated by the programmes. A lot of support was now being requested for green and digital advice and SWLEP’s focus would continue increase in these areas.

Peer Networks

PB advised the meeting that the Peer Networks programme was ending in March 2022. The programme had experienced organisational difficulty from the beginning with strict eligibility criteria and, initially, unbending rules to follow. Programme Manager, Brea Woods, who successfully developed very good relationships with



	<p>participants in the SWLEP Peer Networks, would now use her same approach for the Cyber Cluster in the BCC.</p> <p>IW would welcome the return of Peer Networks as the approach had been very successful, using the skills sets of the entire team.</p> <p>SME Climate Hub This was a UN initiative and SWLEP’s internal work was being led by Hugh Williams, Business Navigator for the Green Economy. A SWLEP Working Group had been established across ages and functions within the company and was now going to individual employees for more information. Completing our own assessment would give SWLEP more credibility with other SMEs in our area. The Business Cyber Centre would have a significant impact on that for us, as data centres required high levels of energy. Sustainability was therefore a strong area of focus for the BCC.</p> <p>Both Local Authorities were focussing internally on their own Council work to reach their carbon neutral targets. Companies should not be working on their own on this agenda, as collaboration would increase their effectiveness.</p> <p>A question was raised about any impact on the Growth Hub around the uncertainty of LEPs. The meeting was assured that this was not as pertinent for SWLEP as the Growth Hub team was in house and could be re-deployed if necessary.</p> <p>KPIs Targets were agreed as part of the programmes. Although Peer Networks was struggling to reach its targets at the moment, SWLEP was confident this would increase in time for the end date. Business support would continue to pick up. The Growth Hub community membership was SWLEP’s own internal target.</p> <p>The Business Environment Subgroup: NOTED the contents of the report and points of clarification were raised during the session.</p>	
<p>5.0</p>	<p>Update on green skills and green jobs from the Skills & Talent Subgroup meeting on 12 January</p>	
	<p>PB updated the meeting on the discussions held at the Skills & Talent Subgroup meeting held on 12 January regarding green skills and jobs. Key points were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the meeting took a comprehensive look at many aspects of the green skills debate; • overall, businesses were still struggling to find staff with the appropriate skill level; • upskilling of staff would be required to meet the demand; • data was available nationally about the potential rise in green skills / jobs from the Local Government Association commissioned report from Ecuity; 	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the report by Ecuity had looked at Local Authorities around our area and compared Swindon and Wiltshire with a number of comparator neighbouring local authorities.; • the largest sector seeing emergence of new jobs was low carbon electricity generation and use, and lower was EV manufacturing and hydrogen generation; • there had been a great response and debate with attendees; and • the impact of the route to net zero was becoming more and more of a focus for SWLEP's work. <p>The item was brought to the Business Environment Subgroup to show how this subject would impact on the area's business environment in the future.</p> <p>PB was tasked to produce a summary report for the Skills & Talent Subgroup for discussion at the meeting in March to decide on a series of agreed actions by April. The information would also be brought back to this Subgroup.</p>	
6.0	Plan for Growth update	
	<p>DS spoke to the meeting and advised that the Plan for Growth Working Group had met on Thursday, 13 January</p> <p>As there was still no publication of the LEP Review, the Levelling Up White Paper nor an indication of the budget for LEPs as there was yet no clarity about their future role, the original timetable for work on the Plan for Growth had been pushed back.</p> <p>The Levelling Up White Paper had been planned for publication in the week commencing 31 January, then we would hear later about LEPs, which was adding to the level of uncertainty. The relationship between LEPs and LAs in relation to Plan for Growth had not been fully resolved. We did not wish it to be just about liaising with LAs, and no LEP activity.</p> <p>MC commented that this was being driven by Government and Local Authority policy, and there was not enough of a commercial slant. What about Joint Ventures? We would want to drive forward in areas of innovation and therefore needed to lead. There was a concern that we could see duplication of effort between local authorities and the SWLEP. The SWLEP wanted to be focussed on action to deliver our purpose of sustainable growth of the local economy.</p>	
7.0	Is there a role for SWLEP in supporting the adoption of the Living Wage?	
	<p>There was a discussion on the role of SWLEP in supporting the adoption of the Living Wage in the context of assisting recruitment in the area. SW advised that the Living Wage cited by the Living Wage Foundation differed from that quoted by Government. More businesses in Swindon had signed up to this initiative than those in Wiltshire.</p>	



Recent meetings had heard how difficult businesses were finding it to recruit and the question was raised whether declaring that they were “a living wage employer” would help this process. Was there a tie-in with recruitment at lower levels? Was it something SWLEP should be involved in? MC advised the meeting of the situation within the care sector, where companies were not prepared to increase salaries to pay that living wage, because commissioning groups were limiting the value of contracts due to local funding restraint.

Although the issue had been raised in SWLEP’s webinar series about business ethics, promotion of the subject per se had not been discussed. SWLEP could play an awareness raising role through the Growth Hub out to the business community.

Action: PB and team to increase awareness of the Living Wage amongst the business community via social media.

An investigation into the overall picture for the Swindon and Wiltshire area to gain the evidence would be beneficial, but SWLEP was lacking resources. So, was information already available. Had other LEPs been doing it? The Living Wage focusses on the amount paid per hour, but some companies give other benefits which would exceed this minimum.

Action: AN to check with FSB to ascertain whether it had already carried out something similar.

Put in a package re levelling up.

The Living Wage Foundation had an interactive map which showed the location of Living Wage Employers.

<https://www.livingwage.org.uk/living-wage-map>

8.0 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. (HW)

- AN would like to go back through the minutes and recap to see how items were progressing.
- MC would like to ascertain the confidence levels of businesses in Swindon and Wiltshire at present and what were the areas of focus for Local Authorities in the next 12 months.



	Local Authorities' Business Plans were going through the governance cycle in February and would then give an idea of the direction of travel.	
9.0	AOB	
	The action concerning the Governance of the Group should be removed as this was currently robust enough.	
	Date and time of next meeting	
	Next meeting: Wednesday, 9 March 2022 – 2pm to 4pm Future Dates for 2022: To be advised.	
	Meeting closed at 14.43pm	

Alison Nasta

09 March 2022