

# Surrey Business Leaders Forum – Terms of Reference (2024)

## Purpose and Responsibilities of the Forum

The Surrey Business Leaders Forum (SBLF) must represent a diverse range of businesses related to local economic strengths and priorities. It will provide challenge and insight about business impacts of local economic growth initiatives and raise awareness of Surrey’s business and economic needs. The Surrey Business Leaders Forum acts as an advisory group to provide industry perspective to feed into the One Surrey Growth Board.

The Surrey Business Leaders Forum will:

- have an advisory role to the One Surrey Growth Board (OSGB) and Surrey County Council on the implementation of local economic, skills, and infrastructure strategies.
- receive drafts in advance of the OSGB to comment and scrutinise proposals.
- bring together senior business leaders across Surrey to identify economic and infrastructure priorities, and influence the direction of public funding proposals and initiatives.
- shape business, trade, and investment support related to local business and economic need.
- input comments for relevant Cabinet papers.
- contribute to evidence relating to Surrey’s economic performance by providing company level data that reflects economic conditions and positive/negative experiences of local businesses.
- provide specialist delivery expertise where required.

## Meetings

Surrey Business Leaders Forum meetings will take place in-person on a quarterly basis. The location of meetings will be different each quarter and when possible, rotate around the county. There will be the option to host informal ad-hoc virtual and/or in-person meetings between quarterly meetings (e.g. based on specific topics of interest or to get business input into time-sensitive issues).

## Connection with other Boards and Groups

It is expected that the SBLF will utilise connections with the network of Programme Steering Groups (such as the Surrey Skills Leadership Forum, the Surrey Innovation Board and Surrey Place Leaders Group) to ensure appropriate links between the wider

Economy & Growth work programme. To provide coherence and connections between programmes of work, all businesses working in these groups are encouraged to also join the Business Leaders Forum.

Members will act as advocates for the Surrey area, working collectively with other established groups, and in wider partnerships to advise, provide insight, and promote the work of the Council to achieve economic growth in line with the Surrey economic strategy.

It is particularly vital that there is a clear and strong connection between the business voice input that the SBLF provides to the OSGB. The connection between the OSGB and SBLF will be made by the Chair of the SBLF acting as the Vice-Chair of the OSGB. In addition, the OSGB membership will have a private sector majority with six SBLF members nominated to act as business representatives on the Growth Board. The six business representatives will comprise:

- 1 SME (Small and medium-sized enterprise)
- 1 large business (250+ employees)
- 2 Employer Representative Bodies
- 2 businesses from a priority sector (Priority sectors currently include Cyber Security, Gaming, Artificial Intelligence, Automotive, Space, TV/Film/CreaTech, Life Sciences, Animal Health, Med/Bio Tech, and AgriTech & FoodTech).

There will be an opportunity to refresh the private sector representatives sitting on the One Surrey Growth Board every two years.

## Membership Criteria

The membership of the Forum must comprise of Surrey businesses from across the county that represent the local economy's priority sectors, employer representative bodies, SMEs and other large businesses, ensuring a comprehensive reflection of Surrey's economic landscape. The Forum will be comprised of around 30 members, with a Surrey based business and/or conduct significant business in the county.

Nominees will sit on the Forum as representatives of a local organisation / sector, and membership will be based on the following criteria:

- **Priority Sectors and Diversity of SME Membership:** we are focusing on businesses that play an active role in supporting our priority clusters including Cyber Security, Gaming, Artificial Intelligence, Automotive, Space, TV/Film/CreaTech, Life Sciences, Animal Health, Med/Bio Tech, and AgriTech & FoodTech sectors. Along with the representation of SMEs, this will ensure a broad representation from the Surrey business community.
- **Inclusion of Established, Leading and High-Growth Businesses:** productive larger organisations (250+ employees) contributing to Surrey's economy, local supply chain, and social value are instrumental in supporting

the growth of the local economy. Their perspectives and representation of their sector and its wider interests are key for developing a coordinated and ambitious local economic plan.

- **Interest from Employer Representative Bodies:** there will be membership positions available for entities such as Surrey Chambers of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses, and the Institute of Directors, among other significant industry / trade associations related to Surrey.

To ensure a balanced economic strategy reflective of Surrey's diverse landscape, we are keen to emphasise the importance of geographic diversity as a criterion. This aims to promote a more equal representation of businesses from all across Surrey, ensuring each region's unique economic strengths and challenges are considered.

## Role and Expectations of Forum Members

Members of the Surrey Business Leaders Forum are pivotal in shaping and steering the economic future of Surrey. They will work in partnership with other senior business leaders across Surrey to identify, influence, support and contribute to the economic and infrastructure priorities, policies, strategies, and action plans in the local area. All Forum Members hold an impartial role and are required to act in the best interests of the public, avoiding any unethical financial, professional or political gain on the part of such individuals and their spouse or partner. As such, specific expectations are set to ensure active and meaningful participation:

- **Active Engagement:** Members must actively participate, attending in-person meetings and contributing to discussions with insights from their sectors or areas of expertise.
- **Representation:** Members are expected to represent their organisation or sector's wider interests and perspectives, advocating for policies and initiatives that promote economic growth and sustainability across Surrey.
- **Ambassadorship:** Acting as an ambassador for the Forum, members should promote its objectives within their network, encouraging collaboration and support for the Forum's activities and ambitions. This may also include contribution to the wider economy and growth work programme outside of meetings as required.

Forum Members are required to read and agree to the Surrey Business Leaders Forum **Conflict of Interest** and **Code of Conduct** policies – see Appendices.

## Role of the Forum Chair

The Surrey Business Leaders Forum Chair holds responsibility for being the channel for the business voice, ensuring collaborative and productive conversations during Forum meetings, in addition to representing the views of the Forum as Vice-Chair on the One Surrey Growth Board. The Forum Chair is a representative role which considers Surrey's

economic strategy interests, views of the diverse business representatives and sectors, and local economic needs and opportunities. The Chair must also consider and review any conflicts of interest that may be raised by Forum Members during meetings.

## Nomination Process to the Forum

To ensure a transparent process and the recruitment of a diverse and representative membership, the SBLF conducts a process and campaign of open recruitment encouraging businesses and business representative organisations to submit an expression of interest. Opportunities for membership vacancies are openly advertised via various communication channels such as the Business Surrey website, LinkedIn, and networks of existing members.

Interested businesses will be encouraged to register their interest through an email response to the following inbox - [economy.growth@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:economy.growth@surreycc.gov.uk). An officer from Surrey County Council will follow-up the submission of interest with a call to understand more about the business / organisation, and a selected panel will complete the shortlisting process of selecting members against the SBLF eligibility criteria.

In the instance of the maximum number of Forum Members being reached, interested organisations will be contacted and recorded on a holding list. An annual review of the membership will be conducted to allow for existing Forum Members to step down if their circumstances change, and for new Forum Members to join.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Conflict of Interest Policy

### **Purpose of Policy**

This policy is to protect the interests of the Surrey Business Leaders Forum (the Forum) and Surrey County Council by:

- a) Avoiding any unethical financial, professional, or political gain on the part of such individuals and
- b) Preventing the personal interest of Forum Members from interfering with their duties to the Forum.

An actual or perceived conflict of interest occurs when a Forum Member is in a position to influence a decision that may result in personal gain or gain for a relative as a result of the Forum's decisions.

### **Obligations of Members**

The Forum expects that all Forum Members will ensure:

- Their private interests or beliefs do not conflict with their responsibilities as a Forum Member
- Their position on the Forum is not used to confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person
- They are not involved in, nor influence, any decision or allocation of Council services or resources from which they, their partner or spouse might benefit.

For the purpose of this policy, spouse or partner means anyone who meets the definition in the Localism Act, i.e. my spouse or civil partner, or a person with whom I am living as a spouse or a person with whom I am living as if we are civil partners.

**Members of the Forum must declare at the start of every meeting any conflict of interest where there is, or could be perceived to be, a conflict of interest between their responsibilities as a Member of the Forum and their personal interests/ employment / other membership / sponsorship duties. If a Member of the Forum recognises a conflict during the meeting, they must make this known during the discussion to the Chair.**

All Members of the Forum must declare:

1. Any financial or non-financial interest which could be considered in any way to bring about a conflict with the Forum's / Council's interests.

2. Membership of any organisation within Surrey that a Member of the Forum believes could be relevant to declare in circumstances which could impact their conduct or influence their actions, including those which:
  - a. Exercise functions of a public nature
  - b. You are in a position of general control or management
  - c. Their principal purpose includes the influence of public opinion or policy.
3. If a spouse or partner holds a senior managerial position in an organisation with which the Council does, or seeks to do, business.

## **Procedure**

**There will be a standing item at the start of every meeting, at which point all Members of the Forum have a duty to disclose the existence or perceived existence of any conflict of interest relating to the meeting agenda items.** A

decision will be made regarding the impact and relevance of the conflict, and which of the following actions are required:

- Documentation of the conflict, but no further action necessary
- Allowing involvement with the relevant agenda item, however, prohibiting the interested Member of the Forum from voting on the matter related to the declared conflict
- Prohibiting the Member of the Forum from any discussion or vote on the matter related to the declared conflict.

It is the role of the Chair to uphold the integrity of the Surrey Business Leaders Forum meetings. If the Chair and/or Surrey County Council, as secretariat for the Forum, reasonably believe a Member of the Forum failed to disclose an existing or possible conflict of interest, they shall notify the individual of the rationale and the individual will have an opportunity to explain reasons for the failure to disclose the conflict. In the event of repeated failure to disclose a relevant interest, the Chair may take appropriate disciplinary action, including removal from the position on the Forum.

To ensure the implementation of a robust process to manage conflict of interests, this policy has been drafted considering resources of best practice.

## Appendix 2: Code of Conduct

All Members of the Surrey Business Leaders Forum are required to operate in accordance with the Code of Conduct on commencing their membership of the Forum. It is the role of the Chair to uphold the integrity of the Surrey Business Leaders Forum meetings, and Forum Members will be held to account by the Chair to act in line with the behaviours as set out in the Code of Conduct.

1. As a Member of the Surrey Business Leaders Forum you are required to act in accordance with the Nolan Principles of public life:
  - a. **Selflessness** – Forum Members are expected to act solely in terms of the public interest
  - b. **Integrity** – Forum Members are expected to avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their role on the Forum
  - c. **Objectivity** – Forum Members are expected to act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias
  - d. **Accountability** – Forum Members are accountable to the public and other Surrey businesses for their decisions and actions
  - e. **Openness** – Forum Members are expected to act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner.
  - f. **Honesty** – Forum Members are expected to be truthful. This includes declaring any conflicts of interest and taking steps to resolve such conflicts
  - g. **Leadership** – Forum Members are expected to actively promote and support these principles by applying them to their own behaviour and challenging poor behaviour.
  
2. When acting in your capacity as a Member of the Surrey Business Leaders Forum:
  - a. You must treat your fellow Forum Members, members of staff and others you come into contact with when working in their role with respect and courtesy at all times.
  - b. You must act solely in the public interest and should never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person or act to gain financial or other material benefits for yourself, your family, a friend or close associate.
  - c. You must not place yourself under a financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might be reasonably regarded to influence you in the performance of your official duties.
  - d. When carrying out your duties as a Forum Member, you must make all choices and decisions based on evidence, being as open as possible about your decisions and actions, and should be prepared to give reasons for those.
  - e. You must declare any actual or perceived private interests, both pecuniary and non-pecuniary, including membership of any Trade Union and political party, that relates to your duties as a Forum Member. You must take steps to resolve any conflicts, following the procedures set out in the Conflict of Interest policy.

- f. You must promote and support high standards of conduct when serving as a Forum Member, in particular as characterised by the above requirements, by leadership and example.