

Meeting Notes – One Surrey Growth Board (09.09.24, 13:00-14:00)

Welcome and Introductions

Matt Furniss: Chair

Welcome from Matt.

Introductions from all Board members (see Appendix for attendee list).

The Refreshed Growth Board

Dawn Redpath: Director – Economy & Growth, Surrey County Council

This item covered the context behind the refresh of the Growth Board, including the following key points:

- Previously an informal partnership that developed strong relationships
- With the Council's new economic growth responsibility and functions, the Board has now been refreshed to be more formalised and action focused
- The Board will take on a strategic leadership role to oversee the economic strategy, future and legacy funding streams, and provide diverse insight from local stakeholders
- The Board has been configured to emphasise the importance of business voice in the discussions
- External perspectives and added value of the associated Working Groups are key to support the decision-making process.

The importance of the governance documents (Terms of Reference, Code of Conduct, and Register of Interest) and making open and transparent decisions was raised. A standing agenda item will be implemented at the start of each meeting for Board members to declare any conflicts of interests, to ensure due processes are established and decisions are made in the best interests of the Surrey economy. This is particularly relevant considering the new responsibility for oversight of funding including the forthcoming Growth & Innovation fund. It was noted that papers and agenda will be shared on the new [Business Surrey One Surrey Growth Board webpage](#).

A diagram (included in slide deck) was shared with Board members to visualise how the Growth Board works in practice with the wider governance mechanism, including key

groups such as Cabinet, Surrey Business Leaders Forum, and the Surrey Place Leaders Group. Emphasised the role of the Board as a broader representation of businesses and key sectors to feed in a variety of perspectives when making decisions.

Data Review

Dawn Redpath and Matt Furniss

The approach to the refresh of the economic growth strategy was outlined including qualitative partner engagement and quantitative analysis of the evidence. MetroDynamics have been appointed to support with the existing evidence evaluation to ensure consideration of what the evidence means for Surrey and the future of economic growth.

A snapshot of some key data was highlighted, in relation to the context for the drivers of change and why there is a focus on certain areas within the economic strategy:

- **GVA per head** – role of Surrey’s economy considering it has the largest economy outside of London. Data shows Surrey is almost 40% above the [CIPFA nearest neighbours](#) median (benchmarked data against similar areas), however, there is evidence that growth is not always consistent. There is strong business activity in the South East but we are aware that there are barriers in this area. Question to the Board as to how can we identify and address those barriers?
- **Businesses in Knowledge Intensive Sectors** – key indicators and drivers of growth in Knowledge Intensive Sectors, and a priority for the team has been around maintaining our position in this area. Data indicates over the past year Surrey has lost some businesses in that service area and that many of these losses were accounted for by micro-businesses. Question to the Board as to how we can ensure we maintain strength in these sectors?
- **High-growth businesses** – Surrey has a good share of businesses that are high-growth, however, the recently launched Growth Hub within the Economy & Growth team has not received as many enquiries for support from high-growth businesses as anticipated. Must consider if there is a reason behind this and how we maintain our position in this space.

The previous strategic priorities were highlighted. Data for the upcoming strategy will be refreshed by the end of October.

Questions to the Board: does the data reflect the Board’s experience and understanding? What do Board members want to see included as part of the refresh?

Discussion

Key discussion points raised included:

- The resilience of Surrey businesses previously, however, the pandemic was the only time to impact this.
- Consideration of where we target support – should it be more focused on businesses that are not yet high growth?
- More data and local intelligence required around reasons that small businesses fail, as well as mapping existing data against Surrey business demography.
- Helpful to understand the capacity of the skills system to map what we can deliver, for whom, and by when. Also the impact of skills capacity on the ability of small business growth – businesses need local skills and resource to grow.
- Would be useful to have insight around international, import, and export potential. Suggestion for a future Board agenda item.
- Challenges around house prices and economic infrastructure impacting recruitment potential and business growth.
- Surrey has a high proportion of small and micro-businesses, comparable to the rest of the UK, but has a high number of HQs and high-value knowledge intensive businesses.
- Need to consider what we as a partnership have the resources and levers to resolve, vs what is a wider scale systemic challenge that we need to track but cannot necessarily directly impact.
- Key conversation for the Growth Board moving forwards needs to be around recruitment, retention and workforce to consider where we get the workforce of the future from and how are we preparing that workforce.

Workshop Feedback – Surrey’s Economic Growth Strategy

Matt Furniss and Rob Gibson: Economy Lead, Surrey County Council

An overview of the economic strategy workshop was provided to Board members, and it was noted that an output document is currently being developed to summarise the discussions from the session. A brief context for the strategy refresh noted that following the transfer of new economic responsibilities to the Council from April 2024, the government encouraged an update of existing economic strategies. The evidence base is a key element of this process for Surrey to identify local opportunities and challenges, as well as considering wider connections (such as regional, London, etc.).

Key workshop emerging themes identified:

- Solution-focused partnership working, recognising the complexity of the challenges which will require coordination of a number of partners.
- Delivery plan from the strategy needs to consider role of Growth Board and wider partners, not just SCC delivery.
- Emerging national policy changes and whether that may present new opportunities (particularly around planning and housing) – will need to have an awareness of tangible changes that will be coming in the next few months.
- Emphasis on prioritising – what practical opportunities can we action?

Key workshop insights relating to the strategic priorities:

- Economic infrastructure – importance of delivering infrastructure to enable economic growth and focusing on the opportunities linked specifically to growth.
- Potentially merge the infrastructure with whole-place approach priorities.
- Workforce and recruitment challenges – touched on all other strategic priorities, labour market in Surrey is holding back growth of Surrey businesses, solutions to attract people into the area relate to infrastructure development and may develop the local workforce.
- Maximising opportunities for all – the language of this priority did not really resonate with people in the room. Pivot priority to focus on workforce and recruitment to bring clarity to that priority.
- Clusters – agreed it is the right approach to focus on those sectors that are the strongest and driving growth but cannot forget about the wider business base.

Plan to share a draft of the economic strategy between now and December – will want to continue engagement with the Board in the meantime.

Discussion

Key discussion points include:

- Positive feedback about the strategy workshop and the opportunity to have an open and productive discussion with people they had not met before.
- Noted in the workshop that Surrey’s economy does have areas for improvement and that is beneficial to reflect on the areas of need.
- Would have been good to have the opportunity to understand conversations that were happening within the other breakout groups on the day and to identify specific ideas / initiatives that were raised.
- Workshop discussion included NEET (not in education, employment or training) and how local employers could offer on the job training.

- **Need to ensure these discussions lead to practical actions that can work in practice and drive forward change, including ensuring ownership to oversee delivery.**

Reflections and Close

Matt Furniss

Offer to Board members to host the next Growth Board meeting on Tuesday 3rd December, 15:00-17:00.

- Offered to host at Guildford College or Merrist Wood College.

Appendix: Attendees and Apologies

Attendees

Name	Job Title	Organisation
Matt Furniss (Chair)	Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport, and Economic Growth	Surrey County Council
Chris Hurren (Vice-Chair)	Office Managing Partner	RSM UK
Cllr Ann-Marie Barker	Leader D&B	Woking Borough Council
Andrew Pritchard	Chief Exec D&B	Runnymede Borough Council
Will Davies	Chief Operating Officer	University of Surrey
Gary Headland	Further Education rep	Activate Learning
Bruce Penson	Managing Director	Prodrive IT
Andrew Cawthorne	Director of Business Development	Surrey Satellite Technology
Helen Foord	Head of Global Government Affairs	McLaren
Tracey Palmer	Business Representative Organisation rep	Business Improvement District
Louise Punter	Business Representative Organisation rep	Surrey Chambers of Commerce
Observers		
Dawn Redpath	Director, Economy & Growth	Surrey County Council
Beth Reeder	Policy & Programme Advisor, Economy & Growth	Surrey County Council
Rob Gibson	Economy Lead	Surrey County Council
Simon Crowther	Executive Director for EPG	Surrey County Council

Apologies

Mike McNicholas: AtkinsRéalis