

Meeting Notes – One Surrey Growth Board (04.03.2025, 14:00-16:00)

Welcome and Introductions

Matt Furniss (Chair)

The Chair welcomed all members to the meeting. Apologies were noted and deputies welcomed to the session – it was highlighted that Bruce Penson, the SME rep on the Growth Board, will be stepping down due to increased work commitments and that the process to select another SME representative is in progress.

Corporate Update: LGR & Devolution

Matt Furniss (Chair) and Dawn Redpath (Director of Economy & Growth, Surrey County Council)

Surrey is on the fast-track accelerated programme to create new unitary authorities with a view to unlocking devolution. There is a requirement to move at pace with an initial proposal being submitted in March and final proposal due in May. This year's elections have been delayed to allow for the creation of the new unitary authorities, with new unitary elections to be held in May 2026. It was noted that it is likely that most economic functions would eventually sit at a strategic Mayoral level.

Update: Economic Growth Strategy and Funding Framework

Rob Gibson (Business Improvement Manager, Surrey County Council)

This item recognised the Strategy and Framework as the delivery plan for the Growth Board and provided a recap of the Economic Strategy refresh development and the One Surrey Growth Board's (OSGB) influence in its completion, following the workshop held in September 2024. The vision of the strategy is underpinned by 3 strategic pillars focusing on residents, businesses and places. The strategy and initial funding rounds have now been approved by Cabinet – the funding rounds include:

- Business Growth Grant
- Future Surrey Fund
- Innovation Spaces Fund.

It was noted that as this is the first year of establishment, the process, targets and demand of funding bids will be assessed throughout and refined moving forwards. There was an overview of example KPIs and next steps for the funding rounds – see slides for details.

OSGB ownership of the programme was noted with the role including programme oversight, monitoring delivery, check and challenge of bids and funding rounds, generating new ideas for future funding rounds, and the requirement to approve any proposals over £500k which will then go to Cabinet for confirmation.

Discussion

- Resilience and sustainability of the funds and criteria for the future is key, considering the upcoming local government reorganisation. The funding framework needs to be balanced around what can be aligned across the county to ensure congruence and coherence.
- There have been discussions with District & Boroughs and other partners to identify high-level strategic priorities which exist county-wide and how to localise that as part of the funds. There have also been conversations about longer-term aims with projects that can be developed with this funding to create something at scale.
- Feedback from the Surrey Business Leaders Forum (SBLF) was noted:
 - The need to implement a rigorous process that provides benefit against money spent but is not a burden on businesses in terms of the reporting and monitoring required.
 - The opportunity to leverage funding and scalability of projects.
 - Clear messaging required to encourage a range of bids.
- The timeline of the funding rounds was highlighted – all 3 will be launched on the 1st April, with decisions for the Business Growth Grant expected around June, and the others on a longer time-frame. There is potential to launch additional funding rounds dependent on level of interest, with some projects to be delivered in the same financial year and some being longer-term scalable projects.
- The issue of potential conflict of interest was clarified with the funding award process involving an Investment Panel (selected from SBLF members that do not have a conflict), and the OSGB members being in a position of monitoring and oversight, with any approval for decisions over £500k needing to be confirmed by Cabinet as part of the governance process. There will also be an Economy & Growth team member responsible for managing and reviewing any bids that are submitted.
- Support for businesses to apply for a grant was raised – support will be available for businesses that would like to bid for the Business Growth Grant. The Future Surrey Fund will go through a 2-stage process including an expression of interest that will

be triaged and then meetings held with an Economy & Growth team member to help shape the proposal, before submitting the detailed business case.

- Discussion around equity of opportunity for these grants and needing consideration across geographical approach, bids offering the most beneficial outcomes, and those that may not have experience with applying for grants. It was suggested that a strong communications strategy would help to ensure a range of applications.
- It is important to understand the pipeline and how we are meeting outcomes, as well as joining up existing funds to avoid duplication and identify any gaps that may influence how the future programme is shaped. There is the potential to flex the requirements of the grants when we have more of an understanding of demand.

Economic Growth Delivery in Surrey 2025/26

Patricia Huertas (Assistant Director – Economy & Growth, Surrey County Council)

This item focused on economic delivery in Surrey in 2025/26 highlighting findings from the recent refreshed evidence base that has been developed as part of the economic strategy, the Surrey County Council economic work programme, and how this relates to the strategic priorities identified within the refreshed strategy. See slide deck for further details.

This item was discussion based with Board members reflecting on how we will achieve the joint objectives, economic themes that it would be helpful to explore, and any opportunities for partnership working to shape the work programme.

Discussion

- The Surrey Baccalaureate was noted as a piece of work that would support parity of recognition for industry pathways in vocational roles, defined by business need. This linked with previous LSIP engagement with sectors finding it challenging to encourage recruitment – this area of work will support young people to join a technical education pathway that leads onto local employment.
- There needs to be due consideration of the dynamic business environment and that demands for business change quickly – there is a need to create a pipeline for recruitment which addresses the growth market but also capabilities rather than just skills required for a role.
- It was suggested there needs to be more emphasis on international trade as part of economic delivery, which will help to increase GDP. It was noted there are ongoing conversations with the airports to consider how to progress in this area.

- The defence sector was raised as an area of potential growth including the professional services interface with this industry. Surrey is in a unique position being close to London and with existing defence facilities to grow this sector.
- The consideration of local government reorganisation was highlighted with opportunities to lobby for further enterprise zone development and the ability to respond cohesively with local and strategic planning to drive GVA growth.
- Importance of consistent messaging and communication across partners (particularly amongst SMEs) to ensure take-up of future funding rounds and business support provision.
- Support must be targeted according to businesses that need to start, grow and thrive was raised as these each require different levels of support and are the most challenging steps for businesses.
- Supporting SMEs to look into growth markets was noted so they can adapt their services, prioritise and understand where there is opportunity for growth, which will support the county's prosperity.
- Interest in the latest Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) figures – a report is being published next month and will be shared with Board members.
- The importance of the integration between transportation and economic growth was raised.
- Suggestion that it would help to identify areas where we have strengths and there is opportunity to build on this, to streamline existing workstreams and monitor where we are making progress. There is opportunity for identified sectors to be added to the forward plan for discussion, as well as shaping the next round of funding according to sectors and demand if required.

Actions

SCC – share upcoming report on NEET.

Reflections and Close

Matt Furniss (Chair)

The Chair thanked Board members for their contributions. The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 24th June, 09:00-11:00.

Appendix: Attendees and Apologies

Attendees

Matt Furniss (Chair)	Surrey County Council	
Chris Hurren (Vice-Chair)	RSM UK	
Cllr Ann-Marie Barker	Woking Borough Council	
Andrew Pritchard	Runnymede Borough Council	
Will Davies	University of Surrey	
Mike McNicholas	AtkinsRéalis	
Karen Pengelly	Business Improvement District	Deputising for Tracey Palmer
Louise Punter	Surrey Chambers of Commerce	
Yazmin Taylor	Department for Business & Trade	Deputising for Emma Smith

Apologies

Andrew Cawthorne: Surrey Satellite Technology

Bruce Penson: Prodrive IT

Gary Headland: Activate Learning

Helen Foord: McLaren

Tracey Palmer: Business Improvement District