

Meeting Notes – One Surrey Growth Board (24.06.2025, 09:00-11:00)

Welcome and Introductions

Matt Furniss (Chair)

Welcome from the Chair and introductions from the group.

1. Surrey Economic Growth Fund Update

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

An overview was provided of the Surrey Economic Growth Fund process so far including level of interest, trends and timeline (slide deck provides further detail).

The Economic Growth Funding Framework was developed to direct economic growth investment – additional investments to date include the Rural England Prosperity Fund (recently launched) and Skills Bootcamps grant process (soon to be announced).

Discussion:

Queries regarding being able to re-allocate funding if there is over-subscription – there is opportunity for the Investment Panel to review applications, and the Growth Board have a role in agreeing options for re-allocation.

Discussed the levels of interest across areas of the county and certain organisations. There were a high number of applications from businesses in Guildford, Reigate & Banstead, and Waverley, with the rest of the applicants generally spread across the county. There was also high interest from colleges and universities.

The benefit of launching the Fund was noted to help gather intelligence on a Surrey footprint regarding current demand and gaps.

Stage 2 of the application process was clarified – following analysis of expressions of interest, applicants have received feedback from the team confirming whether their application meets all the criteria to proceed directly to stage 2 and clarifying, where needed, recommendations and opportunities to shape proposals further to stand the best possible chance of success.

It was noted that the first funding round indicated high interest in upskilling and training – consider these opportunities for the next funding rounds.

Approval process clarification – the strategic direction for funding rounds and grant applications is held by the Growth Board. An Investment Panel has been established with cross-representation from internal Council colleagues), the Surrey Business Leaders Forum Chair and additional business representatives that have relevant insight (and do not have a vested interest in the funding round). Applications over a certain value are approved by the Growth Board and progress via the standard Council approval mechanism (Cabinet and Council).

2. Growth Board KPIs Review

Patricia Huertas

This item provided context for the current Growth Board KPIs and the review that is required to ensure they are relevant and fit for purpose.

The Growth Board KPIs were set in 2021, along with a *Plan for Growth*, led by Lord Hammond's Future Economy Surrey Commission which focused on GVA and productivity. The indicators help to measure the outcomes of the Economic Growth strategy to drive and track impact. Over the past year Surrey's interest has evolved with the transfer of Local Enterprise Partnership functions to Surrey County Council, the launch of the refreshed Economic Strategy and updated strategic priorities.

This discussion item focused on the current Growth Board KPIs, whether they remain relevant, if any additional metrics should be included to reflect the current economic environment, and if any targets should be amended. Acknowledged that whilst the Growth Board may not have many levers around some of these indicators, they may still be key to track to understand the economic context and drivers of the work programme.

The indicators were highlighted accordingly for consideration:

- *Gigabit capability* target has been exceeded so could be removed
- *Surrey GVA* and *Claimant count* targets to be amended to reflect current picture
- The remaining three Growth Board KPIs and their targeted position still feel relevant.

Discussion:

Noted the importance of indicators to demonstrate inclusivity work such as Indices of Deprivation, homelessness, demographics of those not participating in courses. Consider the language being used regarding these indicators and related programmes, ensuring a strength-based focus rather than deficits. Key to understand how we encourage employers to hire those that face challenges entering employment and support aspirations.

Economic inactivity provides helpful insight into the demographics of people out of work in Surrey and aligns with Government ambitions to get people back into work.

There was discussion around any gap analysis that has been conducted for strategic priorities to allow us to set targets and measures accordingly. Data has been gathered as part of the strategy refresh evidence base – there is limited resource to impact across the county, so it is key to review trends and agree a focus.

Acknowledged that there will be limitations on the ability to influence some of the metrics. There may be lobbying capability but there is an understanding that the Growth Board cannot be held accountable to influencing the indicators directly. Alongside identifying Growth Board KPIs, there is benefit in tracking delivery metrics, particularly those around employment and skills programmes.

The adoption of AI and its impact on the labour market (potential to replace existing jobs) and business productivity was discussed, with the consideration of metrics that would help to quantify the impacts of AI. The pace of AI and its adoption is exponential and training programmes / funding opportunities need to ensure there is longevity to align with future demand.

Insight required into future skills that businesses need – Surrey Chambers of Commerce due to release a survey to capture some of this information. Government guidance / policy would also be helpful in this space to inform educational institutions and businesses.

Actions:

- Economy & Growth team to review Growth Board KPIs and suggest updated measures and targets for Growth Board approval.
- Updated Growth Board KPIs to be shared with the OSGB via email, or for consideration by the Operations group (see item 4) ahead of the next Growth Board meeting.

3. Local Government Reorganisation update

Dawn Redpath (Director – Economy & Growth, Surrey County Council)

A brief update was provided of the progress for local government reorganisation in Surrey.

Surrey is on the fast-track programme for devolution with confirmation by Government that Surrey is required to establish unitary authorities initially, with devolution and a Strategic Authority to follow. There were three local government reorganisation proposals from Surrey submitted to Government – 2 of those have been taken forward to consultation by Government, which closes on the 5th August (details in the slide deck).

Discussion:

It was noted that economy and skills functions are likely to sit at a Strategic Authority level with consideration required around how to establish new authorities to run most effectively.

The Surrey Business Leaders Forum feedback highlighted the clear role for businesses at a Strategic Authority level, but with some concern around the debt figures published and how that will be managed to ensure the success of new authorities.

It was clarified that a breakdown has not been provided for the level of serviceable debt (that brings revenue / income) and unserviceable debt (main cause of financial challenges). There has also been indication of enhanced funding to alleviate the levels of debt across the county.

4. Governance and Oversight Changes

Dawn Redpath (Director – Economy & Growth, Surrey County Council)

This item outlined the upcoming policy / expectations from Government that necessitates a review of governance mechanisms to support delivery of upcoming programmes.

Government has introduced new policy positions and funding streams which have brought on new requirements for strategy development and work streams in the inclusion space (details included in slide deck). This merits reflection from the Board regarding their current role and how this has changed from previous requirements.

The Get Surrey Working Plan (GSW) requires strong insight from the Integrated Care Board and Job Centre Plus. There needs to be consideration regarding a role for Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Job Centre Plus at Growth Board level, as well as considering health representation in this space. A GSW Plan proposal is due to be submitted DWP by 27th June (shared as pre-reading) – there is an ask for Growth Board approval for the structure set out in this proposal.

Future policy direction may change and focus on growth more generally – there are numerous management and delivery mechanisms in place already that are well defined to facilitate the programme delivery. The Growth Board holds the vision and the programme to account, however, there is a gap in the strategy to delivery space which requires further conversation at granular detail. Proposal to set up a Growth Board Operations function – there will be representation from the Board as an administrative mechanism to support the upcoming work to move from strategy to delivery. This group is likely to require more regular engagement (suggesting 6 weekly).

Discussion:

Agreement that there is an opportunity for DWP to be part of strategic discussions to influence how to deliver this work. Noted the economic inactivity statistics and that 22,000 people in Surrey want to get back into work – DWP will be critical to developing the action plan and understanding the interventions required.

VCFS representation may also be beneficial as part of these discussions.

It was highlighted that several of the supported employment programmes previously sat outside of the Economy & Growth team – opportunity now to ensure the economic growth and business demand focus for these programmes to understand skills requirements and direct funding / delivery accordingly.

Challenges around housing and transport were raised which prevents people accessing vacancies and locations where work is available. It was noted that these challenges can also lead to isolation which impacts the health system.

It is important to understand the demographics within the statistics e.g. the breakdown of those economically inactive and where support should be targeted.

Economic Development officers in Districts and Boroughs have business development hubs operating in parts of the county – would be a helpful link to this work.

The membership of the delivery groups was discussed – some of these are already in place to deliver the work. There is an intention to remove duplication and reconcile other existing mechanisms to ensure the governance is more functional on a Surrey footprint.

Actions:

- Identify and invite representatives from ICB and DWP onto the Board.
- Economy & Growth team to follow up with Growth Board members to identify Operational Group representatives.

Reflections and Close

Matt Furniss (Chair)

Thanked the Board members for their contribution – next meeting will take place on 23rd September.

Appendix: Attendees and Apologies

Attendees

Matt Furniss (Chair)	Surrey County Council	
Chris Hurren (Vice-Chair)	RSM UK	
Cllr Ann-Marie Barker	Woking Borough Council	
Phil Turner	Runnymede Borough Council	Deputising for Andrew Pritchard
Alan Sutherland	University of Surrey	Deputising for Will Davies
Rand Watkins	AtkinsRéalis	Deputising for Mike McNicholas
Terence Naidu	Envisionit Deep AI & Truzo	Terence Naidu
Andrew Cawthorne	Surrey Satellite Technology	
Louise Punter	Surrey Chambers of Commerce	
Owen Jenkins	Surrey County Council (Executive Director – Place)	Attending as observer

Apologies

Andrew Pritchard: Runnymede Borough Council

Will Davies: University of Surrey

Mike McNicholas: AtkinsRéalis

Gary Headland: Activate Learning

Helen Foord: McLaren

Tracey Palmer: Business Improvement District