

Meeting Notes – One Surrey Growth Board (23.06.2026, 14:30-16:30)

Welcome and Introductions

Matt Furniss (Chair)

Welcome to Board members – particular welcome to Helene (recently appointed Surrey Chambers of Commerce CEO) and to Kristina and Piers (members of the Surrey Business Leaders Forum), attending as business representatives on behalf of the SBLF Chair (Vice-Chair of OSGB).

The Chair noted that following the establishment of the East and West shadow unitary authorities, he will look to extend an invitation for each shadow unitary to identify one representative Member to attend future Growth Board meetings in an observing capacity.

Reflecting on the legacy

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

This item presented a summary of the Economy & Growth work and wider economic context since the One Surrey Growth Board (OSGB) was established in 2020. The item illustrated key achievements and how economic growth in Surrey has progressed within this period. The main highlights were as follows:

- At the end of 2019, the Economy & Growth team (3 people at the time) had £500k in funding to support economic drivers with limited evidence base, strategic relationships, or strategy to work from.
- The OSGB was established in August 2020, with Lord Hammond leading a focus on GVA growth and business productivity.
- A strategy and action plan were developed in 2021; this was recently refreshed in 2025 with the publication of [Surrey's Economic Growth Strategy 2025-2035](#). Further strategic documents were developed including the *Economic Strategic Funding Framework* to direct funding ensuring it supports economic growth priorities; and a *Workforce, Employment, and Skills Strategic Framework* and *Local Skills Improvement Plan* (led by Surrey Chambers of Commerce) to identify gaps and challenges that need to be addressed to support Surrey's workforce.

- A pivotal moment was the transition of the Local Enterprise Partnership functions to local government in April 2024, bringing in additional economic leadership expectations across a county-wide geography.
- The Economy & Growth team is now nearly at 90 people and leverages circa £31m in funding annually to support a wider economic ecosystem, including business growth and workforce & employment support. Limited involvement remains in the wider economic landscape such as infrastructure, housing delivery, and planning.

Current position

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

This item outlined the current position for Surrey County Council in terms of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and devolution. Board members received an update about the new shadow unitary authorities, the ongoing work on a proposal for a Foundation Strategic Authority, and what that could mean from an economic growth perspective.

As part of LGR, the East and West shadow unitary authorities have been established with existing council in Surrey ceasing to exist as of 31st March 2027. The unitaries will be focused on a more localised agenda, moving decision-making closer to local communities. LGR unlocks devolution for Surrey. Between now and vesting day (1st April 2027) the shadow unitaries will be working in collaboration with existing councils to shape future programmes and priorities.

The unitary authority election results were highlighted, with a Lib Dem majority across both.

The OSGB's high-level strategic tracking metrics were presented, noting that there are still challenges in some areas – such as the percentage of high-growth businesses being lower than some other areas in the South East and the work to consistently improve economic inactivity rates in the county.

Data highlighted the difference between the east and west of the county, demonstrating the potential for a targeted approach to strategic interventions for economic growth across each unitary authority.

The potential for a future Strategic Authority in Surrey was noted with an expression of interest having been submitted to government in March 2026 – the future of a Strategic Authority in Surrey is subject to the decision of the new Surrey Leaders. It was highlighted that if the proposal progressed, there would be a consultation on the Strategic Authority in July to which the Growth Board would have an opportunity to respond.

The next steps were explained in terms of economic growth functions, with a mechanism required to ensure that Surrey benefits from strategic county-wide devolved economic funding. To achieve this, there is hosted model service configuration proposal for the shadow unitary authorities to consider – the hosting of county-wide strategic functions would enable the ongoing delivery of county-wide programmes from Government across Surrey. The Shadows will consider that proposal at the end of July 2026, which proposes hosting the functions until current contracts with Govt. end or a Foundation Strategic Authority is established, whichever happens soonest. The hosting model, if approved, will require the establishment of an inter-authority agreement and robust governance to oversee the county-wide programme of work.

Discussion:

The future of economic growth programmes and how this aligns with District & Borough (D&B) responsibilities were discussed. Local economic development programmes run by D&Bs will continue and be aggregated to unitary level. The proposed hosted model will include strategic functions delivered on a county-wide footprint such as transport, strategic planning, and economic strategic growth & delivery. Several existing Economy & Growth programmes have been awarded multi-year settlements from central Government with others still as annualised funding. There is a focus on securing agreements ahead of the Surrey County Council ceasing to exist to ensure consistency of delivery.

Query regarding how outcomes for grant programmes are being tracked. This differs depending on the relevant programme with different KPIs established and monitored as part of the grant contracts. Examples of outcomes include number of jobs created, commercial space developed, upskilling and progression of the workforce, and new products or services delivered.

Board members discussed the differences that were highlighted between east and west Surrey and the importance of data / mapping economies of scale. The west of the county is home to most of the universities' campuses as well as international headquarters. The geographic and infrastructure advantage of the west was also raised, with links to London, proximity to the Thames Valley Corridor and Heathrow, driving more businesses into the area. Suggestion to consider the airport economy and how to work with the wider economic functioning area to bring jobs and skills to Surrey. There was also a question on how best to drive productivity given the gap between the east and west of the county, or whether there should be a strategic approach that focuses on their existing strengths.

Board members discussed the local authority boundary and what this means to business growth. A regional level is helpful from a business perspective, particularly in terms of

mapping out where there is land pressure and opportunities to direct funding and enable growth. International trade potential was raised, but this would take a high level of investment and collaboration across a wider geography. These are considerations that would be part of a Local Growth Plan, led by a Strategic Authority.

The [British Business Bank's South East Investment Fund](#) was noted, which could be an opportunity to encourage entrepreneurs and smaller businesses to move into the county.

Actions:

SCC – share latest summary of grants awarded as part of E&G programmes and outcomes achieved so far (particularly those impacting SMEs).

Considering the future

Dawn Redpath and Patricia Huertas

This was a discussion-based item that presented information about the challenges and opportunities for growth in the county, as well as the benefits / functions of a Strategic Authority. Board members were encouraged to consider what future growth looks like in Surrey and how we can continue to build on past successes (including devolved funding and functions).

The benefits of a Strategic Authority and devolution were outlined, along with a breakdown of Strategic Authority roles and responsibilities. The goal for Surrey would be to progress to a Mayoral Strategic Authority to receive higher levels of strategic devolved funding which would present more opportunities for the county. Examples of West Midlands and Greater Manchester Combined Authorities and their achievements were presented, demonstrating the opportunities available for Strategic Authorities.

Board members were encouraged to consider what challenges and priorities we need to consider for future growth in Surrey, how we can support the journey for the potential future Strategic Authority, and which representatives need to be part of this conversation moving forwards to provide insight and help drive the agenda.

Discussion:

Surrey's infrastructure and transport network limitations were noted – with people able to travel easily into London but less easily across the county.

There is an opportunity to differentiate Surrey by focusing on collaboration across sectors to bring longevity to a business which generates jobs – such as connecting anchor institutions (e.g. the NHS) with business funding opportunities, and leaders in technology

to attract more headquarters and, therefore, employees. The example of several cruise companies moving their HQs into Surrey was raised – considered an emerging industry that we could maximise by encouraging small businesses into their supply chains and presenting incentives to employ locally.

Unlocking funding opportunities was discussed and how to create something that attracts businesses (consider links with airports). There are limitations to Government funding, and a Mayor for Surrey would drive further investment in the area. A gear and leverage effect would support businesses to access funding, invest in the county, and see a return on investment to create an ecosystem of growth. It was noted that there would be a requirement to determine the appetite for investment and risk. It would also be beneficial to determine what areas require funding vs collaboration.

A place-based approach was suggested, such as cluster mapping of sector strengths (e.g. defence and automotive) and developing those relationships to drive change.

Priorities for future discussion included:

- Transport and infrastructure – this may require further representatives to provide additional insight.
- Skills and employment – recognising the pace of change in skills required across sectors and the link to transport which limits students to access learning.
- Housing and strategic planning.
- Economic development and regeneration.

It was agreed that health & wellbeing and public service reform (although having links to wider economic growth impacts), sat at a more local level. It was also noted that the Business Improvement Districts continue to represent towns, ensuring the voice of local knowledge, understanding a sense of place drives place-based regeneration and local economic development activity.

Actions:

SCC – structure the agenda for future meeting to work across all themes but to focus on key overarching cross-cutting challenges and opportunities

SCC – to provide detailed priority specific data and insights for future meetings to allow for discussion about existing gaps, opportunities, challenges, and to inform next steps.

SCC – ensure business representatives are sighted on the above data and insights to help shape opportunities and obstacles from a business perspective.

Reflections and Close

Matt Furniss (Chair)

Next One Surrey Growth Board meeting scheduled for Tuesday 22nd September, 14:00-16:00.

AOB

Potential Strategic Authority consultation may go live before the next OSGB meeting – if so, the information will be shared with the Board to prepare a response.

Appendix: Attendees and Apologies

Attendees

Cllr Matt Furniss (Chair)	Chair	
Christos Tsinopoulos	Higher Education representative	
Julie Kapsalis	Further Education representative	
Terence Naidu	SME private sector representative	
Tracey Palmer	Employer Representative Body representative	
Helene Hall	Employer Representative Body representative	Attended for first hour
Cllr Ann-Marie Barker	District & Borough Leader representative	
Dawn Redpath	Lead officer	
Kristina Pereckaite	South East Angels	Attended as business representative on behalf of the Vice-Chair
Piers Leigh	Curchod & Co	Attended as business representative on behalf of the Vice-Chair

Observers / speakers

Patricia Huertas: Surrey County Council (speaker)

Beth Chandler: Surrey County Council (secretariat)

Apologies

Chris Hurren: Vice-Chair

Mike McNicholas: Large Private Sector representative

Andrew Pritchard: Runnymede Borough Council

Andrew Cawthorne: District & Borough CEO representative

Sophia Sami: Civil Servant representative