**Business Growth Committee**

**Agenda**

**Tuesday 14th September 2021, 10am**

Attendees

**Venue:**

**Microsoft Teams**

**Attendees Apologies**

Alice Choi (Chair) Kate Cousens

Debbie Baker Jane Gaston

Nigel Schofield Denise Proctor

Stephen Fitzsimons Peter Skates

Becky Stuttard Iain Paton

* Introduction from Chair– 5 minutes

Alice introduced the meeting with an update from the last LEP board meeting. It was agreed that this meeting would be a catch up session bringing members up to date on several issues leading into a busy autumn/winter period.

* Scrutiny Committee feedback

Alice and Andy were asked to present at the LEP scrutiny committee in September. The presentation has been attached. The committee were particularly interested in forward planning and impact, this will form a larger part of the work of the committee.

* Growth Hub update - 10 minutes
* Peer Network – Mark Shepherd attended the meeting and gave a presentation on the status of the programme. To date 60 SMEs have been registered with 6 cohorts either started or scheduled to commence shortly. The target for the year is 10 cohorts and 100 businesses. Recruitment is currently ongoing for the remaining places with the final cohorts due to start before Christmas.
* Website – The new LEP website has now been launched, the look and fell of the site is a great improvement, however there are some teething problems with navigation and functionality. It was suggested that a full audit of comms on business growth side including website, social media and other channels.
* Recruitment Difficulties – One of the main issues facing the economy at the moment is a difficulty in recruitment. Although this is being felt across most sectors there are significant issues in retail, visitor and hospitality, logistics and health care. Although these problems are not restricted to Cheshire and Warrington the LEP and partners are working to present solutions. Discussion noted that the end of furlough and the return of students to towns could have an impact on vacancies, this will be monitored in coming weeks.
* Annualised Plan and impact – Discussion around what form this should take. Feedback from Claire Haywood and the main board is for all committees to complete a ‘purpose pyramid’ which demonstrates aims and achievements. In conjunction with the KPIs and LEP pillar work this will be the basis for a 1 and 3 year strategic plan, impact assessment and monitoring. The target for this to signed off is the end of the calendar year.
* Round table on issues raised by committee members – 30 mins

Alice Choi – Very buoyant sector, reluctance from people to return to the office with hybrid working proving a success. Could potentially review land holdings as a result.

Nigel Schofield – Many businesses are assessing potential risk and unwilling to invest or move to grow until the economy settles down. This issue needs to be addressed as will make progress very difficult.

Stephen Fitzsimons – Chamber back seeing businesses. Two main constraints around lack of property and unscrupulous landlords as well as recruitment, particularly of drivers. Town centre car parking is up on pre pandemic levels. Bridge street seeing a recovery with multiple new developments

Debbie Baker – Hynet update. Decision on clusters expected in late October. Lobbying to continue. Peer group for women and ethnic minority around difficulties and access to finance. Gas prices had quadrupled since pandemic as have transportation and logistics costs enhanced volatility

Becky Stuttard –50% occupancy of staff at new HQ with encouragement to increase that. Working with Cheshire Community Foundation and will make introduction

 Next Meeting

Tuesday 11th October

Microsoft teams