

## Minutes

### South East Business Support Advisory Board (SEBSAB) SEEDA Offices, Guildford – 13 June 2008

**Present:** Jeff Alexander (SEEDA – Chair), Bernie Topham (Eastleigh Borough Council), Kieran McNamara (East Sussex County Council), Rafiq Chohan (Slough Borough Council), Fay Webster (ICAEW), Sandy Lovatt (FSB), Rodger Broad (IOD), Linda Rutter (EEF South), Ross McNally (SE England Chambers of Commerce), Deborah Wyatt (Business Link Hampshire & Isle of Wight), Vivienne Gray (HESE), Terry Watts (Proskills), Ian Coates (GOSE), John Gregory (Sub Regional Strategic Partnerships), Janice Munday (BERR), Oona Muirhead (SEEDA), Julie Kapsalis (SEEDA), Marilyn Huckerby (SEEDA), Phil Bailey (SEEDA), Glen Atherfold (SEEDA), Ann Johnstone (SEEDA)

**Apologies:** Janet Edrich (AOSEC), Jonathan Blackburn (RAISE), Marinos Paphitis (LSC), Lewis Scott (UKTI), David Rowland (Skills South East), Tom Fourcade (Envirobusiness), Lynda Jones (Jobcentre Plus), Nick Woolfenden (SEERA), Malcolm Hyde (CBI South East)

1. Welcome and Introductions – Jeff Alexander
2. Minutes of the Last Meeting – Jeff Alexander

The minutes were agreed. All actions had either been delivered or are in hand and ongoing.

3. Transition Management Plan Assessment – Ann Johnstone

AJ fed back on the assessment of the South East Transition Management Plan (TMP) by the national Transition Management Board (TMB) on 15 May. All 9 regional TMPs were assessed using a traffic-light system of green-amber-red. 4 plans were assessed as green, 2 as amber and 3 as red. The South East plan was assessed as green, and seen as a very transparent, clear and easy to follow plan. The assessments relate to an early stage of development, and all plans are expected to show progress before their next presentation. The South East Plan will be reviewed again in August.

The main area for development was identified as further engagement with Local Authorities.

4. BSSP National Update – Janice Munday, BSSP Programme Director

JM identified that the programme was now at a turning point where policy was about to become reality. The economic analysis, market research, designing of products etc had all been done and now the real act of simplifying was about to begin. Last October, 18 areas were published where there was a case for government intervention. Since then meetings to agree the level of regional and local flexibility had taken place for each of the 18 product areas, and workshops for Local Authorities would be taking place over the summer. Once this “fitness for purpose” testing is completed, the bar will come down and the completed products will be handed over to partners to take live. This will take place between October 2008 and March 2009.

We all must ensure, at this point, that businesses see a clean look and feel,

and extensive work on the customer journey with Business Link, work on marketing & branding and monitoring & are all ongoing.

A discussion followed particularly focussed on the Local Authority role, as influencer, working with LAA targets, within the SNR context. JM said that the need for local flexibility was understood, and that the portfolio would allow at least 95% of what Las wanted to do. Further areas, such as LA Shop Fronts, would be looked at under “BSSP 2”, the second phase of the programme.

JM trailed the new BSSP branding, under the wrapper of “Solutions for Business”. The branding would enable the portfolio to be understood as funded by government, it would be a call to arms to Business Link, and would enable key/partners/funders to be identified. There would be a small number of exiting key brands that would be retained – probably T2G, UKTI and MAS. The branding guidelines were due out at the end of July.

## 5. Enhanced Business Link

### (i) Current Picture in the South East – Deborah Wyatt

DW presented the current Business Link position – that it was a national framework, regionally prescribed and delivered locally. It has a large scale reach to the SME market, but is local to the customer, and can meet national, regional and local needs. It delivers the Information, Diagnosis and Brokerage (IDB) model. In the South East there are 6 Business Link providers, who work together as a consortium. (See attached slides).

Members thanked DW for a very clear presentation that had raised understanding of the BL role.

### (ii) Vision for the Future – Glen Atherfold

GA presented the vision for an enhanced Business Link. The 2 drivers for this are BSSP and Transformational Government. There will be 2 main government portals (i) direct.gov for individuals and (ii) businesslink.gov for businesses. BL will start to deal with businesses of all sizes, not just the traditional SME market, to fulfil this. The off-line BL will develop a consistent, quality assured service that is flexible enough to work in a local context. Business Link must now step up to the challenge of becoming the primary access channel, and work was already underway to integrate the T2G, UKTI and DEFRA brokerage into BL. (See attached slides.)

There was support for the sub-regional model of 6 Business Link providers, and for the pure IDB model. The separation test must be adhered to for this to be effective. This must not be abused, even the perception of abuse was damaging to the brand. There was a recognition that their would be work ahead for this Board to align BL, LAA and RES targets and develop local and regional performance frameworks. It was agreed that Sector Skills Councils, Las and business membership organisations could all help BL to target specific markets. GA reported that there was some national work looking at this.

**Action: SEEDA (JK) to work with BL and determine how to work together with other organisations to access a wider market.**

The SE BL providers produce “Customer Insights” on a quarterly basis

providing SE research into Hot Topics to 12,000 businesses.

**Action: DW to add SEBSAB membership to Customer Insights circulation.**

There has been a lot of hard work over the last 2 years to change perceptions of the Business Link brand by delivering a top class service. Customer satisfaction is now very high in the South East. FW offered the ICAEW as a route to asking businesses their views.

**Action: There is a role for SEBSAB to become the advocates on BL, facing the concerns through SEBSAB, and working to change perceptions.**

6. South East Business Support Strategy (first draft – Phil Bailey)

PB presented the first draft of the South East Business Support Strategy. He explained it was very much work in progress. The scopes and principles paper was well received and the first draft started to build on that and to shape the strategy. There were now much stronger linkages into the RES and RES targets and 4 strategic objectives were proposed:

*"To deliver this vision set out at the beginning of the Strategy, business support needs to be focused on a limited number of strategic objectives:*

- Increase the rate of business formation and survival*
- Help all businesses improve their performance by increasing the take up of all types of business support from the public, private and voluntary sector*
- Enterprise for all – address issues of equity and sub-optimisation in relation to under-represented groups and disadvantaged areas through provision of targeted services*
- Target high intensity business support on those businesses and sectors with the greatest potential for growth, innovation and internationalisation"*

It also reflected the Government's Enterprise Strategy "Unlocking the UK's Talent" and Innovation Strategy "Innovation Nation" both released in March.

OM wanted to see mention of the double (or triple) dividend of global competitiveness and sustainable prosperity, and some focus on home based businesses and resource efficiency. She suggested some segmentation would aid this. SL circulated a table showing the relationship between competitiveness, efficiency etc. This could be built into the logic flow. RC asked that the strategy joined up to regulation and showed how we would streamline, and that it showed how the public and private sectors interfaced.

It was agreed that broad engagement was critical and that we should take the right amount of time to produce a good strategy that had wide support. A next draft should be prepared that will go to the SEEDA Board in September, seeking agreement to take it out to consultation, that the consultation period should run for six weeks across Oct-Nov, with an aim to launching the final Strategy on early 2009.

**Action: PB/AJ to prepare a consultation draft. Draft to be circulated to SEBSAB by email before being presented to the SEEDA Board in**

## **September.**

### 7. Next Steps and date of next meeting

The next meeting should cover:

- Transition Management Plan
- Enhanced Business Link
- Business Support Strategy

**Action: AJ to set dates for future SEBSAB meetings for September, December, March.**

### 8. AOB

Place Based Innovation Teams – Marilyn Huckerby

MH gave an update. The consultation period has just finished, with 96 responses received. There has been a lot of support received, but also some very pertinent questions raised. A response to the feedback will be produced, and the specification for tender will now be produced. The first tranche will go live in April 2009, with the second tranche in October 2009. They demonstrate simplification in action and will be BSSP compliant.

Government's Legislative Programme – Ian Coates

The Government is currently consulting on its draft legislative programme 2008/09 and IC distributed a leaflet detailing how to contribute to this.