

Attendees

<b>AC</b>	Ana Christie	Sussex Chamber of Commerce	<b>IF</b>	Ian Fitzpatrick	Lewes DC / Eastbourne BC
<b>BS</b>	Cllr Bob Standley	Wealden DC	<b>IG</b>	Isabel Garden	Wealden DC
<b>CBa</b>	Cllr Christine Bayliss	Rother DC	<b>JB</b>	Jonathan Buckwell	Developers East Sussex (DES)
<b>CBr</b>	Chris Brodie	South East LEP	<b>KG</b>	Cllr Keith Glazier	East Sussex CC
<b>CE</b>	Christina Ewbank	ACES	<b>KT</b>	Katy Thomas	East Sussex CC
<b>CR</b>	Charlotte Rae	University of Sussex	<b>MAQ</b>	Marwa Al-Qadi	East Sussex CC
<b>CS</b>	Clive Soper	FSB	<b>MC</b>	Matthew Chenery	East Sussex CC
<b>DE</b>	Dave Evans	East Sussex CC	<b>ME</b>	Martin Ellis	Recruitment South East
<b>DG</b>	Diana Garnham	Skills East Sussex (SES)	<b>PSm</b>	Penny Shimmin	Sussex CDA
<b>DM</b>	David Martin	Stiles Harold Williams (SHW)	<b>RD</b>	Richard Dawson	East Sussex CC
<b>DSh</b>	Dan Shelley	East Sussex College	<b>RS</b>	Cllr Rupert Simmons	East Sussex CC
<b>DSp</b>	David Sheppard	D-RisQ Ltd	<b>SBa</b>	Sue Baxter	University of Sussex
<b>DT</b>	Cllr David Tutt	Eastbourne BC	<b>SBe</b>	Suzanne Bennett	South East LEP
<b>FM</b>	Fran Meeten	University of Sussex	<b>TH</b>	Tim Hardwicke	Stiles Harold Williams (SHW)
<b>GP</b>	Graham Peters (CHAIR)	ES Rural Partnership			

Apologies

<b>AB</b>	Adam Bryan	South East LEP	<b>PSp</b>	Peter Sharp	Lewes DC / Eastbourne BC
<b>BH</b>	Ben Hook	Rother DC	<b>VC</b>	Victoria Conheady	Hastings BC
<b>KF</b>	Cllr Kim Forward	Hastings BC			

*All of the papers and any presentations delivered at the meeting can be viewed on the following page of the ESCC website: [www.eastsussex.gov.uk/business/eastsussex/selep/tesminutes/tes210622](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/business/eastsussex/selep/tesminutes/tes210622)*

**1. Welcome & introductions**

- 1.1. **GP** welcomed everyone to the meeting and ran through the apologies.
- 1.2. **GP** asked the group for any specific conflicts of interest with today's agenda items and for any additional interests not already held on record; no interests were declared.

**2. Previous TES minutes, 14 Jun 2021**

- 2.1. There were no actions from the previous TES meeting. The minutes were approved by the group as an accurate record of the meeting.

**3. LEP Review 2021**

- 3.1. **CBr** delivered a presentation on the current position of the new LEP Review, which sees the Government undertaking to "evolve the form and function of LEPs" moving forward. The expectation is that an evolved SELEP will be more focussed on business support and be even more business-led, but without an ongoing capital programme underpinning it. Paul Scully MP is the Lead Minister for the process, and the LEP Network has been drafted in to help. **CBr** and **SBe** are also directly involved in two of the working groups set up between the LEP Network and CLGU, looking at 'Accountability' and 'Implementation & Funding Models'.
- 3.2. TES members discussed the LEP Review and made the following points:
  - Whilst we're assuming new capital programmes will be delivered through local authorities rather than LEPs (such as the recent Levelling Up and Community Renewal Funds), this has not yet been confirmed and we don't know for certain how the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will be delivered. Some LEPs may not have been particularly effective in implementing previous capital programmes, but many others have been excellent, including SELEP.
  - Decisions on UK SPF may also be tied up with the anticipated white paper on devolution, however it's been reported (anecdotally) that the devolution schedule may have been parked for the moment.
  - Shifting future capital funding programmes from the 'business-led' LEPs to local authorities does not mean that future funding will be skewed towards the public sector. As just demonstrated with

LUF and CRF, all funding decisions made by our East Sussex authorities are, and will continue to be, dependent on the quality of the bids.

- We don't yet know whether SELEP's core funding will be affected by not having a capital programme underpinning it. Of the current capital programmes, LGF has effectively come to an end, GBF still has projects to be delivered next year, and GPF is a revolving fund so will continue. Unfortunately, core funding is renewed on an annual basis, so SELEP currently only has core funding secured for this financial year.
- SELEP's new 'expert business advice' role will need to work with existing organisations who already provide that service, such as the subscription-based Chambers of Commerce and FSB, plus Enterprise Agencies that are normally free-of-charge and may have a vast number of business support consultants, e.g. Edeal and Let's Do Business Group.
- SELEP, the Growth Hub and all of the above organisations may offer business support from different perspectives, but it's vital that they all *complement* each other in a coordinated way, not compete.

3.3. **CBr** advised that the Government is expected to make recommendations just ahead of their summer recess in late-Jul 2021, so the implications for SELEP will be discussed at the next SELEP Strategic Board meeting on 1 Oct 2021. Any changes will then need to be implemented by 1 Apr 2022.

3.4. **GP** made it very clear that Team East Sussex is important and enormously valued as the economic growth board in East Sussex, so regardless of the LEP Review's outcomes and recommendations, we'll definitely want the TES Board and all of its sub-boards to continue. It's possible that some work may be needed later in the year on changes to TES roles, form and functions, all dependent on the review, but we'll cross that bridge when we come to it.

#### 4. Working Well From Home

4.1. **FM** delivered a presentation on this collaborative project, which came from an idea originally discussed by TES at a previous meeting, was picked up by **GP** and **SBa**, and then handed over to **FM** in the Psychology Department at the University of Sussex.

4.2. The concept stemmed from the Covid-19 pandemic and its immediate effect on working practices – sending the nation out of the office and into 'working from home' overnight. More than a year later, no doubt some sort of home working or 'hybrid' approach is here to stay, so we need to consider how we support home working in East Sussex in the long term.

4.3. Phase 1 of the project was to gather evidence, and the survey data (263 respondents with useable data) is now being processed. Phase 2 will involve turning that data into something 'useful' – a user-friendly resource such as a video or infographic – and then development of a 'best practice toolkit' specific to the needs of local businesses.

4.4. TES members discussed the Working Well From Home project and made the following points:

- The opinions of those not working from home are important and need to be considered.
- Many people are simply unable to work at home and may be feeling disadvantaged by the sense of 'us and them' – does everybody have a *right* to work from home? Statistics from the ONS suggest that the number of people who are able to work at home are not the majority, so there's a divide between those that can and those that can't.
- People unable to work at home may feel disadvantaged, but the opposite is also a factor, i.e. where groups of people do go into the office, those that work at home may feel left out. Teamworking must be enabled both in the office and at home.
- Organisations that need to have people based in the office/workplace, such as East Sussex College, are going through a hybrid discussion at the moment, and are grappling with the above idea of 'enforced' office working.
- Some people are beginning to voice concerns that they have less job security working at home; feedback from professional networks suggests that home working is enabling jobs to be exported.
- There are increased mental health concerns associated with home working – isolation, loneliness, lack of engagement, or an inability to switch off from work causing stress.

- Home working policies need to take account of legal considerations, including health and safety (such as the home office setup). Clear guidance and policies for employers and employees are required.
  - The requirement for office accommodation across the county could change significantly over the next year or so as this plays out, so it's something for TES to keep an eye on.
- 4.5. **FM** advised that the immediate next step during July is to conduct separate focus groups for employers, employees and the self-employed, and a further progress update can be brought back to TES in due course. **GP** suggested using TES as one such focus group, and offered to liaise on the arrangements if required.

*[Action: FM to advise GP whether she'd like to use TES as a focus group for the Working Well From Home project, and if so liaise with GP and DE on the arrangements]*

## 5. Research project: the four-day week

- 5.1. **CR** delivered a presentation on this new study being undertaken by the Psychology Department at the University of Sussex, investigating how a four-day week can benefit businesses and organisations looking to bounce back from Covid-19. The premise is to investigate why employees often perform *better* in their jobs when they switch from working full time to only four days a week, despite having less time to do them.
- 5.2. The project team is currently looking for local organisations that can commit to take part in a 12-week trial of the four-day week, to be run next year. Any organisation interested in participating should email [c.rae@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:c.rae@sussex.ac.uk) for further details. TES colleagues can also help by reaching out to other organisations through their networks, and by offering letters of support to aid the project team's grant applications.
- 5.3. TES members discussed the four-day week project and made the following points:
- There is clearly an overlap between this project and the Working Well From Home project discussed earlier, so both strands will be developed in collaboration over the coming months (and years).
  - There must surely be an optimum balance between productivity and days worked – is that sweet-spot the four-day week, or will we be looking again in the future at moving to a three-day week?
  - Changing working practices will involve a massive cultural shift, which not everyone will be able to achieve, so we need to reconsider how we think about 'normal'. Moving from a five- to four-day week is at least feasible.
  - Some organisations are already doing this – **CE** advised that the workshop at Mercedes Benz in Eastbourne ran a four-day week which proved incredibly popular and won a national innovation award.
  - This concept will be particularly tricky for hospitality and retail, as they are already understaffed due to Covid-19 and Brexit.
  - Customers and consumers often expect services to be available 24/7, so it will be interesting to see whether businesses will be impacted by such a shift in working practices – could it lead to a loss of customers who will go elsewhere?
  - Some businesses have met customer expectations by simply alternating and dovetailing which day their staff members take off.
  - Any organisation attempting to move to a four-day week will undoubtedly need support and advice on how best to implement it – this research project will provide such help for those interested in trying it out.
- 5.4. **GP** has already provided a letter of support on behalf of TES, but other members are also encouraged to do so on behalf of their own organisations.
- 5.5. **GP** acknowledged that this subject could continue provoking discussion indefinitely, so suggested possibly convening a separate working group in the future, or having it as a TES Workshop discussion item, at **CR**'s convenience.

*[Action: CR to liaise with GP and DE as appropriate on bringing the four-day week research project back to TES for discussion at a future TES Workshop, or via a separate TES working group]*

- 5.6. **SBa** also offered to coordinate presentations/webinars from the University of Sussex on any other research going on regarding the future of work – for TES colleagues or a wider audience, possibly with employers getting involved too if appropriate – if that would be of interest. **GP** agreed to discuss this offline.

## 6. Commercial property update

- 6.1. **DM** and **TH** from Stiles Harold Williams (SHW) delivered a presentation on the ‘Room to Grow 2’ report funded by East Sussex County Council, a follow-up to the first Room to Grow commercial property supply-and-demand study, originally completed by SHW twenty years ago in 2001. The new report is split into three main categories – Office, Industrial and Retail – broken down by size, grade and location.
- 6.2. At the time of the original study, office demand was the key factor. Nowadays that’s far less the case and there’s been a shift towards warehouse space and logistics. Aging stock with poor EPC ratings is also a looming problem, especially as the Government looks to implement changes to minimum requirements (min A or B rating by 2030).
- 6.3. **CE** observed that their offices are bucking the trend and are actually in demand, mainly from people moving out of home and businesses reducing their size, as they’ve just achieved 100% occupancy in all their (small serviced) offices.
- 6.4. **DG** commented on some recent research into what makes going into the office desirable, and it seems ‘campus’ style is worth considering when changing the use of large offices (i.e. including gym facilities, coffee shops etc at the same site).

## 7. Funding programmes: updates

- 7.1. **RD** provided very brief updates on some of our ongoing funding programmes:
- 7.2. UK Community Renewal Fund (CRF): the bid from ESCC, containing 11 projects with a combined ask of £5.08m, was submitted ahead of time and has been acknowledged by MHCLG. We expect funding decisions by the end of next month, so are working on preparing the grant agreements in the meantime.
- 7.3. Towns Fund: Hastings BC has been awarded £24.3m through their Town Deal. Investment includes a new green/low-carbon centre of excellence that will provide new commercial space while also helping the town make the most of the emerging ‘green economy’ opportunities; it will also boost the town’s tourism offer through improvements to the Castle and other public spaces. Lewes DC is still awaiting the imminent announcement regarding the Newhaven Town Deal.
- 7.4. Levelling Up Fund (LUF): Eastbourne, Lewes, Rother and Wealden all submitted bids for major capital investment by the 18 Jun 2021 deadline. Hastings BC is considering bidding in a future round.
- 7.5. Getting Building Fund (GBF): the majority of our 8 projects are now underway. All of the GBF monies (£11.18m in total) must be spent by Mar 2022.
- 7.6. Growing Places Fund (GPF): a funding decision for Phase 2 of the Observer Building in Hastings (£1.6m GPF) will go to next week’s SELEP Accountability Board meeting.
- 7.7. Local Growth Fund (LGF): SELEP has been working on a ‘lessons learnt’ document, which officers are now reviewing. The report will be presented to the SELEP Strategic Board in Oct 2021, after which it will be treated as a live document to be updated as LGF project evaluation continues.
- 7.8. SELEP Covid-19 Recovery Funds: the £4.4m skills and business support funds were launched at a webinar event on 27 May 2021. Full details of the funds, including a recording of the webinar, are available on the [SELEP website](#).
- 7.9. **GP** advised that TES would like to hear more information on the individual projects contained within the Levelling Up Fund and Towns Fund bids, and suggested that Borough and District colleagues are invited to present summary information at the next TES meeting.

***[Action: Borough and District colleagues to be invited to present summary information on their Levelling Up and Towns Fund bids at the next TES meeting on 19 Jul 2021]***

## 8. SELEP Strategic Board, 25 Jun 2021

- 8.1. **SBe** gave a very brief outline of the agenda items going to this week's SELEP Strategic Board meeting, which will include: the appointment of two new Directors and a Diversity Champion; a presentation from the Port of London Authority (PLA) on making better use of the River Thames; an update on the SELEP Recovery and Renewal Strategy; a LEP Review update; consideration of Chair recruitment and a 'Board effectiveness' survey; a Growth Hub update; governance arrangements for Freeport East; and a Sector Support Fund (SSF) update.

## 9. Additional updates & stakeholder reports (for info)

- 9.1. **RD** highlighted the Economy Recovery Plan (ERP) report and the significant level of investment, over £100m since Sep 2020, which is a huge achievement by everyone involved.
- 9.2. **DSp** highlighted the Business East Sussex (BES) report, which includes an update on the Growth Hub review. He also noted that BES regularly sends out a really useful newsletter, which you can subscribe to on the [BES website](#).

## 10. TES round table / AOB

- 10.1. **DSh** advised that East Sussex College's consultation on their new strategic plan, including information on their ambitious estates plans for each campus, remains open until the end of Jun 2021. Visit the [Virtual Town Hall](#) for more information. **GP** agreed that the plans are exciting and asked **DSh** to come back and present them to TES in more detail at the next meeting.

*[Action: DSh to present details of East Sussex College's new strategic plan and estates strategy at the next TES meeting on 19 Jul 2021]*

- 10.2. **DG** noted that Skills East Sussex (SES) has established a 'net zero / green jobs' working group, and agreed to share a link to their introductory presentation/webinar when it's ready.
- 10.3. **AC** commented on the ongoing challenges for international trade, both import and export, due to supply chain challenges globally. A shortage of raw materials and goods is impacting business.
- 10.4. **AC** also highlighted an upcoming event on [The Revival of Tourism and Hospitality](#) following the pandemic, taking place on 14 Jul 2021.

### Summary of actions:

- 4.5 **FM** to advise **GP** whether she'd like to use TES as a focus group for the Working Well From Home project, and if so liaise with **GP** and **DE** on the arrangements.
- 5.5 **CR** to liaise with **GP** and **DE** as appropriate on bringing the four-day week research project back to TES for discussion at a future TES Workshop, or via a separate TES working group.
- 7.9 Borough and District colleagues to be invited to present summary information on their Levelling Up and Towns Fund bids at the next TES meeting on 19 Jul 2021.
- 10.1 **DSh** to present details of East Sussex College's new strategic plan and estates strategy at the next TES meeting on 19 Jul 2021.