



Digital Leaders LEP Group Meeting
Topic - Growth hub sustainability
11th May - Buckinghamshire Business First Growth hub, Saunderton

IN ATTENDANCE:

Stu Anderson (CIOS Growth Hub), **James Brown** (GFirst LEP), **Rich Burn** (WSX Enterprise), **Frances Campbell** (Thames Valley Berkshire LEP), **Gary Coyle** (Digital Leaders), **Roya Croudace** (BE Group), **Neil Dagger** (Nominet), **Karolina Daniuk** (Digital Leaders), **Heather Dean** (Buckinghamshire Business Support), **Philip Dunkley** (DCLG), **Lynsey Dunn** (Buckinghamshire Business First), **Andy Durman** (EMSI), **Joanne Elliott** (Velocity Growth Hub), **Dr Fiona Ellis-Chadwick** (Loughborough University), **Sandy Grom** (DCMS), **Prof Mark Hart** (Aston University), **Jackie Ledger** (LLEP Business Gateway), **Heather Martin** (Oxlep Business), **Jo Minnaar** (Swindon and Wiltshire LEP), **Rob Perks** (Swindon and Wiltshire Growth Hub), **Sam Pusey** (Oxford Innovation Services), **Marianne Whitfield** (Cobweb Information)

Gary Coyle – Chair, Digital Leaders LEP Digital Group

MINUTES OF MEETING:

1st Presentation: Buckinghamshire Business First
Presenters: Heather Dean & Lynsey Dunn

- Buckinghamshire Business First has successfully launched brand new website allowing its Members (businesses) to engage, find partners, get training and promote their services to the local network ('B2B match-making site for businesses')
- Bucks also launched its first Membership scheme (150 paying Members in 9 months)
- Goals and desired outputs for the LEP include (Outputs in the next 12 months):
- 660 businesses having undertaken a diagnostic for business needs analysis
- 100+ grants provided to facilitate jobs and business growth
- 100 businesses getting 12 hrs business support
- 20 businesses started on a investment readiness programme
- Increased incubation space for micro businesses backed up onsite business support
- Demand led workshops particularly on exporting and sector specialisms

2nd Presentation: EMSI
Presenter: Andy Durman

- Company's goal is to help organisations make better, informed decisions based on various data sets. Company facilitate cross-sector connectivity by joining sectors together through the common language of data.
- EMSI works with LEPs and Growth Hubs to help them become competitive, understand their strengths and understand their impact in a broader, regional perspective.

3rd Presentation: **Cobweb Information**

Presenter: Marianne Whitfield

- COBRA is a comprehensive offer of business factsheets and information essential in setting up and growing a business (focuses on legal issues, market issues, information that someone starting a business needs to be aware of)
- Cobweb works with a number of LEPs and Growth hubs and with a number of major banks, enterprise agencies, the network of libraries and over 4,000 Business Advisors
- Cobweb's current projects include the development of a Business Ideas Generator App in collaboration with North Tyneside council. This Business Ideas App can be white labelled and designed for the Growth hub network

4th Presentation: **Aston Centre for Growth, Aston University**

Presenter: Mark Hart

- The recent research looked at Developing a pipeline of growth businesses at the local level
- Main research finding: Businesses with less than 9 employees are more likely to succeed;
- The research showed that microbusinesses are generally doing better and failing less.
- 'Scaling' is an important dynamic to nurture in the UK economy.
- Action for LEPs and Growth Hubs is to create a robust support network based on private and public sectors collaboration. The aim for the network should be to identify businesses with 'growth ambition', help in development/deepening of the ambition and challenging of the owner-manager mind-set. It's all about better preparation, better understanding, and ambition

5th Presentation: **Loughborough University**

Presenter: Dr Fiona Ellis-Chadwick

- Loughborough University is collaborating with DCLG and LEPs to develop a High Street retail index for the Government's Digital High Street initiative
- Initial research data was shared with the group
- GFirst LEP were involved in an initial pilot, this work is now being extended in both Warwickshire and Leicestershire
- Loughborough University are keen to work with other LEPs and Growth hubs

6th Presentation: **Nominet**

Presenter: Neil Dagger

- Nominet shared some recent research on the digital capability of the UK's SME sector
- 49% of SMEs are still offline, despite research confirming that 91% searches about the business happen online.
- 58% of businesses that aren't online, admitted that if given the right support they would be happy to 'get online'.
- Having just social media, doesn't make you a 'trusted business' in the eyes of the consumer
- Nominet is happy to support LEPs in their work supporting the local businesses to get online and is happy to provide training materials, guides etc.

Digital Leaders update:

- Digital Leaders is hosting "Digital Leaders week" 19th – 23rd June and has offered to promote on the Digital Leaders website and social media channels any Growth hub or LEP that is hosting a SME event that week
- The flagship event that week is the National Digital Conference on the 22nd June in central London, a few conference passes are still available for LEPs and Growth hubs
- Lloyds Bank and Google are hosting 18 regional Digital Workshops for SMEs in 2017. Expressions of interest were invited to help co-ordinate and attract regional SMEs. The

intended locations for these workshops were shared with the group. Contact Gary gary.coyle@digileaders.com who is happy to share the list with those not in attendance.

- Digital Leaders also asked for expression of interest from Growth hubs who would be willing to work with Government and Corporates to develop a National Digital Skills hub pilot. The pilot would involve testing different engagement models in a region to help understand what is the motivation needed for those SMEs that have not yet adopted digital in their businesses. There was general agreement that the Growth hub network should be involved in shaping the pilots.
- Digital Leaders also asked for expressions of interest to help form a small Growth hub steering group.