

Subject: Greater Brighton Business Survey
Date of Meeting: 29th July 2014
Report of: Chair, Greater Brighton Officer Programme Board
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Ward(s) affected: All

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 To report the findings of the Greater Brighton Business Survey 2014 and present the recommendations arising from the survey.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Greater Brighton Economic Board

- (1) notes the findings of the Business Survey as found in Appendix 1 and in the Greater Brighton Area summary (Appendix 2)
- (2) Consider three areas that they would request that the Officer Programme Board give specific consideration to when developing an action plan to respond to the business survey recommendations
- (3) Request that the Officer Programme Board bring an action plan to the next meeting of the Board which responds to the business survey recommendations

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

- 3.1 The Greater Brighton & West Sussex Business Survey was commissioned in 2013 by partners from Brighton & Hove City Council, West Sussex County Council, Lewes District Council and the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership.
- 3.2 The survey was commissioned to better understand business growth ambitions and the barriers to achieving them; and, to explore particular issues facing key emerging sectors
- 3.3 The survey geography covers West Sussex, Brighton & Hove and Lewes District areas.
- 3.4 The survey undertook 1,000 structured telephone interviews and as further 40 in depth follow up interviews with key stakeholder businesses. The number of telephone interviews undertaken in each area were allocated and weighted to the business population of the area to ensure proportionality.

4. KEY FINDINGS ARISING FROM THE BUSINESS SURVEY

- 4.1 There are three particular good news stories which have emerged from the business survey:
- That the level of innovation activity within the 1,000 companies surveyed was around three times higher than the national average;
 - That the level of exporting and internationalisation was also high, alongside particularly strong links to London;
 - That growth ambition was high amongst the surveyed businesses: 40% of businesses can be considered growth ready, with 14% falling within a definition of 'high growth'. The proportion of the workforce with graduate level qualifications is also particularly high in the surveyed businesses, which is linked to the findings on innovation and growth.

4. KEY FINDINGS SPECIFIC TO THE GREATER BRIGHTON CITY REGION

- 4.1 Compared with the Greater Brighton and West Sussex area as a whole, businesses in Greater Brighton are:
- More likely to think that connections to London are an important aspect of their location.
 - More likely to employ graduates
 - Less likely to think that broadband connections need improving

5. RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING FROM THE BUSINESS SURVEY

5.1 The report contains 10 key recommendations for consideration by the Greater Brighton Economic Board

1. **Spatial issues:** Local Authorities should take a collaborative approach to supporting business growth, given that the differences in the issues that they face do not differ greatly by local area.
2. **Sectoral issues:** There is merit in adopting a sector-based approach to supporting businesses, focusing on identifying specific needs within each.
3. **Supporting Business Growth:** Local authorities should promote and communicate the language of growth more explicitly in terms of profit and turnover.

4. **Business challenges and support needs:** Local authorities should focus on issues where they can actually make a difference, including business friendly procurement and planning.
5. **Expanding markets:** Supporting business growth should focus on widening access to markets, particularly London and international markets.
6. **(Local) Networks:** Formal business networks need to have a clear business intention and be at the right geography for that purpose, but there may be as much value in creating spaces to encourage informal networking as in trying to establish formal networks.
7. **Innovation:** There is scope to improve both business understanding of how Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) can support them and the outcomes from that support.
8. **Skills and recruitment:** Local authorities should lead on bridging the gap between education and the labour market. This should include providing and promoting work experience placements and industry-based student projects. They should also work with employers to help them address their non-skills related recruitment difficulties.
9. **Inward Investment and Business Retention:** There should be a pan-local authority approach to business retention and outcomes of inward investment activity should be shared and closely monitored.
10. **Transport and communications infrastructure:** Local transport and communications infrastructure policies must clearly support business and economic development.

8. NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 The Greater Brighton Officer Programme Board will develop an action plan in response to the recommendations which will be presented to the programme board in the new year,

5. FINANCIAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report

Finance Officer Consulted: Rob Allen, Principal Accountant Date: 10 / 7 / 14

Legal Implications

7.2 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report

Lawyer Consulted: Bob Bruce

Date: 10 / 7 / 14

Equalities Implications

7.3 None

Sustainability Implications

7.4 Business Survey provides the Economic Board with insight in relation to sustainable economic growth through analysis of environmental industries, eco-tech businesses and clean tech businesses.

Any Other Significant Implications

7.51 None.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Business Survey report
2. Greater Brighton area summary

Documents in Members' Rooms:

1. None.

Background Documents:

None