

Business Recovery and Growth Board

Monday, 15 May 2023

Growth Hub Transition Plan



Is the paper exempt from the press and public?	No
Reason why exempt:	Not applicable
Purpose of this report:	Policy Decision
Is this a Key Decision?	No
Has it been included on the Forward Plan of Key Decisions?	Not a Key Decision

Director Approving Submission of the Report:
Tom Bousfield – Corporate Director Growth, Business & Skills

Report Author(s):
Muz Mumtaz – Assistant Director for Development and Business Support.
muz.mumtaz@southyorkshire-ca.gov.uk

Executive Summary

This report provides details of the proposed transition of SYMCA's Growth Hub service to a primarily online service, as directed by the Board at February's BRG Board meeting.

The report provides details and options available on the timescale for the transition of services and highlights any related risks.

What does this mean for businesses, people and places in South Yorkshire?

Businesses will continue to be able to access key information about funding and programmes available in South Yorkshire via the MCA's website. The direct client function will be channelled through local authority gateway teams or other service providers for more detailed support, including the option to engage a Business Growth advisor for more intensive one to one advice and support.

Recommendations

The Board are asked to consider the 3 options presented below on the transition to a web only service, presented in this paper, and to agree on a preferred timeline. The recommended timeline is 6 months.

Consideration by any other Board, Committee, Assurance or Advisory Panel
None.

1. Background

- 1.1 In March 2023, The Business Growth and Recovery Board agreed that the Growth Hub should become a primarily web service at the SYMCA level (Option 1), with local authorities taking on functions delivered by SYMCA. This paper provides details on the plan and actions required to support the transition to the new model.
- 1.2 The key principles underlying this plan include:
- **Moving to a new model which adds value to the services delivered by others and avoids duplication** of business support provision offered by both local or regional business organisations, including local authorities, Universities and Chambers of Commerce.
 - **Represents value for money**, ensuring that the optimal level of staff and financial resources are deployed by the MCA to undertake agreed activities and services valued by both partners/ stakeholders and end-beneficiaries.
 - **Ensures that a new model and any agreed wider activities and functions (beyond the delivery of core Growth Hub services) helps to add value** in supporting the South Yorkshire economy to grow.
- 1.3 In addition, this also represents an opportunity to undertake a wider review of the role and purpose of the business support function at a regional level, which both compliments and adds value to local delivery.

1.4 The key actions included in the transition plan are outlined in the table below, including an approximate timescale to prepare and implement the changes.

Actions	Timescale
Develop initial proposals/options for a primarily web-only Growth Hub service, including which activities to stop and which to pass to LA partners, and consult with LAs	1 month
Commencement of key activities; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review all MCA Growth Hub web pages, amending content, where necessary to reflect new model. - Removal of reference to phone support referrals. - Develop new web content on referrals to local authority or other business support provision to enhance signposting to partner provision. - Develop and implement a Communications plan to socialise changes to the Growth Hub to the business community and stakeholders. - Commission new interactive web tools to enhance customer experience. - Develop and implement a clear plan for transition - On-going monitoring of performance including level of usage etc. 	1-6 months
Launch of the new web only Growth Hub.	Dependent upon which option is selected.

2. Key Issues

2.1 The transition to a primarily web-based Growth Hub provision requires careful planning and communication with all key stakeholders and end-beneficiaries to ensure that there is no disruption of business support for SMEs, who may contact the MCA requesting advice or support.

It is also important to ensure that the existing Growth Hub web presence is fit for purpose, is up to date and sign-posts enquirers to the appropriate local service provider.

Hence, the illustration below shows 3 options on the speed of the transition, ranging from 1 month to 6 to complete – including an initial consultation with stakeholders and communication to end users.

Option	Activity
Option 1 - Rapid (8 weeks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and publish a new holding page on MCA website - referring enquirers to LA delivery partners. • Remove all references to Growth Hub/Gateway phone enquiry service. • Update back office systems, including phone enquiry messaging
Option 2 - Medium (6 months)	<p>In addition to the above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a share a transition plan. • Communicate changes about the Growth Hub delivery model to stakeholders and responding to any queries/concerns. • Develop an agile enquiry management approach with partners. • Enhance the website content to reflect the new delivery model. • Update CRM system for recording referrals and data exchange with LA systems. • Continuous improvement by undertaking a review of customer experience after 3-4 months and improving services where required.
Option 3 – Gradual (1 year)	<p>In line with Option 2, but with extended time to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop further interactive tools e.g. A.I tools to assist user enquiries. • Develop more extensive coverage business support services available across South Yorkshire. • Undertake additional research on user experience and to identify any gaps in the provision of information.

2.2 Following the transition to a web-based Growth Hub model, the illustration below highlights the functions that the Growth Hub will provide and those provided by local/regional business support teams including local authority business support teams.

Future provision of business support services, following the transition of the Growth Hub.



- 2.3 The primary differences between the options is the time allowed to update stakeholders of the changes, the time to develop a new website presence and the time to pass over the data systems. This could be achieved at pace, though there is a significant risk of service interruption and loss.

3. Options Considered and Recommended Proposal

3.1 Option 1

Fast and immediate move to an online Growth Hub service, with all face to face or telephone enquiry management services discontinued within 8 weeks.

- 3.2 CRM data capture changes would require a little longer to progress due to other dependencies.

3.4 Option 1 Risks and Mitigations

Higher risk of disruption to services, as it leaves less time to engage and communicate with stakeholders and end users. This could be mitigated, in part, through immediate comms to those affected by the changes.

3.5 Option 2

Medium – 6 months for transition to new model. This allows for a longer period of engagement with stakeholders, and the opportunity to reconfigure some parts of the existing web provision to ensure less potential for any service disruption to end users.

3.8 **Option 2 Risks and Mitigations**

Lower level of risk in the disruption to services, as more time is allowed to consult and engage with both partners and end-users. Nevertheless, a full review of web services and the investment /deployment of interactive services is unlikely to be completed within this timeframe.

3.9 **Option 3**

Gradual transition of the Growth Hub to an interactive website model, taking up to 12 months to complete. This provides sufficient time to engage with partners and end users about any gaps and additional requirements.

3.10 This timeframe allows for new interactive tools to be acquired, tested and deployed to ensure an enhanced user experience from a web only service.

3.11 **Option 3 Risks and Mitigations**

Relatively lower risk with regards to the potential disruption of services to businesses/end users.

3.12 **Recommended Option**

We recommend Option 2, as it provides sufficient time for transition planning, while meeting the ambition for speed set by the Board.

4. **Consultation on Proposal:**

4.1 Planned to take place with LA partners in early May.

5. **Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

5.1 May 2023

6. **Financial and Procurement Implications and Advice**

6.1 An allocation of £380,000 has been awarded to SYMCA from BEIS for the financial year 2023/24. As part of the transition plan, a fully costed budget will be required as to the way in which this allocation is going to be spent.

7. **Legal Implications and Advice**

7.1 Ensuring the transition plan and the new model for the Growth Hub complies with any subsequent legal agreement we sign with the Department for Business & Trade to fund/finance the South Yorkshire Growth Hub for 2023/24. The Service Level Agreement is likely to be similar to last years.

8. **Human Resources Implications and Advice**

8.1 N/A

9. Equality and Diversity Implications and Advice

9.1 N/A

10. Climate Change Implications and Advice

10.1 N/A

11. Information and Communication Technology Implications and Advice

11.1 N/A

12. Communications and Marketing Implications and Advice

12.1 Currently there is a separate website for the Growth Hub which sits on Wordpress and is hosted by external company Ink & Water. Last summer we did an exercise to get that site updated to a point that it could be migrated onto the MCA website, just as the SYInvest one has, along with some development work to improve the site. This next step hasn't happened yet due to capacity within the I.T team.

12.2 As part of the decision, consideration needs to be made around which site this new online only service should sit on. It seems logical to make these changes within the MCA site and discontinue the Wordpress site but that will most likely take a much longer time. Consideration should be given to the time constraints of the design, development and management requirements of an online portal as a replacement for the current Growth Hub service. There is a question over whether there is sufficient capacity within both the Communications and IT departments to facilitate this transition or whether external procurement would be required, which could extend transition timelines.

12.3 If a digital replacement is agreed, it should be considered which team will be responsible for managing the service and referrals and whether any extra capacity is required. A comms and marketing strategy will need to be developed to cater to these new changes to ensure we still work in partnership with the local authorities on any new announcements, case studies and scheme updates.

12.4 A comms and marketing plan will also need to be created to communicate the changes both to stakeholders and the business audience.

List of Appendices Included:

None.

Background Papers

Business Support and Investment, Business Recovery and Growth Board, 16/03/2023