

## **Business Growth and Recovery Thematic Board**

6<sup>th</sup> January, 2021

### **MCA Business Support Services**

#### **Purpose of Report**

This report outlines to Members proposed changes to the way the MCA will deliver business support services from April 2021.. The Board is being asked to support the principles underpinning the changes and note the changes being introduced.

#### **Thematic Priority**

Cross Cutting – service delivery

1. Facilitate and proactively support growth amongst existing firms.
2. Attract investment from other parts of the UK and overseas and improve our brand.
3. Increase sales of SCR's goods and services to other parts of the UK and abroad.

#### **Freedom of Information**

The paper will be available under the Combined Authority Publication Scheme.

#### **Recommendations**

**Members are requested to:**

- 1) Support the principles underpinning the need for change in the way business support services are provided as set out in paragraph 2.1**
- 2) Note the intention to bring about change in the way the MCA Executive organise and deliver business support services**

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1** Within the MCA Executive business support services are organised within 3 teams; the Growth Hub team, the Business Investment Team and the Trade and Investment Team. This has been the organisational arrangement since the establishment of the first Strategic Economic Plan in 2014/15. These arrangements have served the purpose of meeting the goals of the original SEP, meeting the objectives of Government through the funding of the Growth Hub via the LEP and addressing strategic and cross cutting needs alongside business support services provided by Local Authorities.
- 1.2** With the development of a new Strategic Economic Plan with new priorities and a new focus and a Recovery Action Plan to address the economic impact of the Pandemic there has been a need to review business support services and introduce changes to the content of the support on offer and the means of delivering that support. This report outlines the proposed changes and underpins this work with a set of principles to guide the work.

## **2. Proposal and justification**

**2.1** Whilst the need for change and development of services is required to address changing economic circumstances and new priorities, the direction of that change needs to be guided by a set of principles against which change can be measured. It is proposed that changes to business support services are guided by the following principles:-

- 1) That the experience of businesses in knowing about and accessing support services is improved by the new forms of delivery
- 2) That change is evolutionary to ensure current service delivery is not adversely affected at a time of intense need
- 3) That we improve data and intelligence about businesses and business need in South Yorkshire
- 4) That the objectives of the SEP and the RAP remain central to the goals of the changes and the changes allow for greater concentration of resources
- 5) That the changes are contained within existing budgets.

**2.2** The change relates only to the LEP and MCAs business support services. These are the combined roles of the current growth hub and trade and investment services. It is proposed that these services are organised into the following arrangements:-

### **Gateway Service**

The current Gateway Service provides a first point of contact and resolution for businesses contacting the Growth Hub for Growth Hub related services. The role of the Gateway service will be evolved to become the front door for all business enquiries and business engagement across the MCA executive team. This will ensure that we have a business focussed, consistent, clearly accessible entry for business into the MCA. It will also ensure that we consistently collect information and data on who and how we are working with business. The gateway service will develop its use of technology to inform, engage and resolve queries from business alongside its direct contact.

### **Special Projects Hub**

This hub would pick up responsibility to run all the special projects the MCA agrees. At the current time this would include those projects we have engaged in through Government contracts with the growth hub, EU schemes, Government contracts with DIT, the RAP priority schemes for business and piloting support for Employee ownership/Co-operatives as a Mayoral priority.

### **International Trade and Markets Hub**

This hub will focus on the work we are doing with international markets, the development of trading relationships in support of businesses, Brexit support to business, the focus on India, China, Europe and USA.

### **Investment and Innovation Hub**

This hub will focus on those businesses with innovation and growth potential, the establishment of cluster work associated with the AMP and OLP and other nascent clusters in SY and enabling incubation and growth of micro and small businesses - particularly those driven by innovation.

### **Design and Development Hub**

This hub will focus on the development of business centred Recovery Action Plan projects, the further development of approaches to support business and the continued evolution of

strategies to deliver the objectives of the Strategic Economic Plan in supporting business growth.

These hubs will be resourced from the current core staff of the Growth Hub, Business Growth and Trade and Investment Teams, the contracted staff from services and those seconded into the MCA to support activity. Financial services, contracting, performance and programming, communications and marketing and other support services will work to support activities within the hubs. The goal will be to complete these internal changes by 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2021.

### **3. Consideration of alternative approaches**

**3.1** Two alternative options have been considered. The first option was not to plan any change. This has the advantage of maintaining the existing arrangements undisturbed. The disadvantage of this option is that it fails to address the principle concerns in business to improve access to support services, and would prove to be an inadequate response to the pandemic and Brexit.

The second option considered was to seek far more reaching change much earlier to bring about greater gains. The disadvantage in this option rests with the higher risk of a breakdown in services during this period as change is made.

### **4. Implications**

#### **4.1 Financial**

The changes proposed are, in the first instance, designed to be cost neutral with a reorganisation of existing resource. Plans are currently being tested as part of the MCA's wider Business Planning exercise.

The proposed changes afford an opportunity to drive efficiencies across other programmes, including how business access skills support.

#### **4.2 Legal**

N/A

#### **4.3 Risk Management**

The risks associated with the proposed changes have been evaluated. In the proposed model the risk of failure is low given the phased and managed nature of the change. The impact of failing to make the changes effectively would be high given the needs within the business community.

#### **4.4 Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion**

The proposed changes will lead to far greater and more diverse access to information and services within the business community. There will be a specific focus on different business models, including employee ownership and cooperatives, and of different types of businesses, including micro, small and medium enterprises and supply chains.

### **5. Communications**

**5.1** The communication and engagement with this plan will be led by the Growth Hub Advisory Board in taking the proposals forward.

### **6. Appendices/Annexes**

**6.1** None

**POST**

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Background papers used in the preparation of this report are available for inspection at: 11 Broad Street West, Sheffield S1 2BQ

Other sources and references: