

Item 3

Title: Mid Year review Solent LEP Growth Hub
Date: Friday 26 November 2021
Purpose: April 1st 2021 - September 31st Growth Hub mid-year review

Solent LEP Growth Hub (GH) provides a service that is open to all businesses and entrepreneurs from all sectors and sizes across the Solent. The GH is the first point of contact for individuals and businesses needing free and impartial business support with an aim to make the route to an answer as simple and straightforward as possible. The GH provides a one to one signposting service, connecting businesses to local and national programmes of support, with the option of online self-service if required <https://www.solentgrowthhub.co.uk/>

In addition to this, the GH provides more intensive support for businesses responding to local demand and current economic conditions engaging with local partners such as Local Authorities (LA's) and Business representative organisations (BRO's) to identify and address gaps in provision.

In the period between 1 April 2021 and 30 September 2021 the GH has adapted its local services to meet the changing needs of businesses. During continued periods of uncertainty for businesses the GH has remained flexible and responsive. In response to the changing trends of enquiry type across the past 6 months and feedback from the LEP's business taskforce and working groups, the GH have introduced new packages of support that included:

- Brexit advisory support
- Digital Accelerator programme
- Recover and Rebuild programme
- Potential exporters programme
- Funding and finance support
- Solent Business Wellbeing service
- Peer Networks
- Opening the door to public procurement
- Maritime UK Solent network briefings
- Sustainable business support programme

These programmes have been very well received resulting in the GH exceeding all KPI's for the 6-month period. GH KPI's for 2021/22 increased by 100% from 2020/21 and performance to date is summarised below showing continued growth and reach:

	Local Annual KPI	6-month KPI	Actual to date (1 Apr - 30 Sep 2021)
Light touch support	10,000	5000	5620
Medium intensity interventions	900	450	643
High Intensity Interventions	175	87	91

In addition to this, the GH are attending face to face events and workshops where it is safe to do so. Recent events with a large reach and international audience include London International Shipping week and several private sector business Expo`s. The GH is exploring new, creative, and innovative ways to provide business support. Most recent is the addition of a Solent LEP business support podcast that is available for download <https://www.buzzsprout.com/1861601/9288209>

Staff continue to work from home and will continue to do until at least January 2022. Hybrid working arrangement have been established and continue to be developed to meet ongoing demands from business (but subject to any national advice in relation to the ongoing response to C-19).

A presentation will be provided at the meeting.

Financial comments from the S151 Officer of the Accountable Body

The Solent LEP receives an annual allocation from Government in order to fund the activities of the Growth Hub which has risen in recent years to £536,500 in 2021/22.

All of the GH's core activities are funded from this grant and this is sometimes supplemented by additional funding such as a recent allocation to provide additional support leading up to and during the UK's exit from the EU.