



## Report title: GROWTH HUB EU EXIT SUPPORT PROGRAMME UPDATE

To: Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Meeting Date: 22 February 2021

Public report: Yes

From: John T Hill  
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Recommendations: The Overview & Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- a) Note the update on The Combined Authority's ongoing EU Exit support; and
- b) Note the programme of future EU Exit activities to support businesses across the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Authority Area

### 1. Purpose

1.1 This report updates the Committee on work that has been undertaken over the past 12 months, plus ongoing and future work, to support business leaders to prepare for and adapt to changes resulting from the UK's departure from, and more recently, the new Trade Deal with the European Union. The report details work carried out during the EU Transition Period and since Britain formally left the EU this year. The report demonstrates how the Combined Authority's Growth Hub has proactively offered support to businesses within our region and utilised funding from the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

### 2. Background

2.1 Following Britain's departure from the European Union on 31st January 2020, the UK formally entered the EU Transition period. To provide support to small and medium sized businesses throughout the transition period, and help businesses prepare for the end of this period, the Growth Hub received £120,000 from the Department for Business, Energy and

Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to cover activity between January 2020 and June 2020. The BEIS funding was subject to strict success criteria, which stipulated our EU Transition programme must include workshops, webinars and bespoke fully funded 1-2-1 sessions with business consultants for business leaders.

- 2.2 The Combined Authority tendered for a partner to deliver our support programme and V4 Consultants were awarded contract. Following update guidance from BEIS the programme being delivered by V4 was extended until October 31st. After this point the Combined Authority launched a social media awareness campaign and an online self-help micro-site for business leaders to ensure a support offering was maintained following the end of the initial contract.
- 2.3 In January 2021, following the end of the transition period, the Combined Authority was awarded a further £110,000 funding from BEIS to proactively deliver specialist advice on importing and exporting goods from the EU and establish a dedicated EU support headline. The Cambridgeshire Chambers of Commerce were contracted to deliver this service until March 31<sup>st</sup> 2021.

### 3. Programme Delivery

- 3.1 **January 2020 – October 2020.** V4's programme went live in January with initial demand strong, during January and February 2020. In March 2020, we adapted our programme to reflect the emerging COVID-19 Pandemic, all workshops and 1-2-1 sessions became virtual sessions, at this point we did see demand drop and worked with V4 to offer joint COVID-19 and EU Exit support sessions to business leaders to maintain interest during the pandemic. We worked closely with other local authorities, member-organisations such as the NFU and FSB to raise awareness of these sessions. Five virtual webinars were held with over 125 businesses taking part in the sessions and over 205 more viewing the recordings of the sessions online. BEIS required us to deliver an EU Settlement Scheme workshop which talked employers through the steps their employees needed to take to remain in the UK. Despite only 45 people attending the initial session the webinar has since been viewed over 300 times on our YouTube channel. V4's consultants held 217 1-2-1 sessions through the duration of their contract, contact details for attendees have been stored by the CPCA and retargeted for other BEIS programmes such as Peer Networking.
- 3.2 **October 2020 – December 2020.** In October, the Growth Hub employed two fixed term Customer Service Assistants to answer incoming enquiries via email and telephone. This allowed the Growth Hub's two Business Advisors to concentrate on their core role of in-depth advice to firms, without compromising on the level of service offered to clients. After V4's contract ended the Growth Hub invested in a self-help resource, accessible via their website, where the end user could view and consume a range of EU Support content, including videos, checklists and infographics, at a time and pace that suited them. We promoted this digital knowledge hub via a paid for targeted social media campaign which increased traffic on the Growth Hub site by over 36% in October and 27% in November compared to September.
- 3.3 **January 2021 – March 2021.** In December BEIS provided The Growth Hub with £110,000 to deliver detailed specialist advice to those businesses regularly importing and exporting good from the EU plus launching a dedicated EU helpline and inbox for inbound requests. BEIS suggested Growth Hubs partner with their local Chamber of Commerce to deliver this

service and after speaking with our Chamber, and researching alternatives, we awarded them a contract for this service. Today we are running both our incoming call helpline offering business leaders instant light touch help while proactively reaching out to targeted businesses who are importing or exporting goods. This service launched on January 4th 2021 and will run until 31st March 2021 we have set a target of 3,000 targeted engagements with businesses.

## 4. FUTURE ACTIVITY

- 4.1 **JOINT MARKETING.** The Growth Hub will be working with the District Councils and Business Organisations on the Combined Authority's Economic Recovery Sub Group to proposition businesses that are known to export goods to or import goods from the EU. Throughout February and March we will be using insight gained from partners to proactively target businesses who are most likely to benefit from our support service.
- 4.2 **VIRTUAL EVENTS.** In late February we have planned a virtual Q&A session in partnership with St Johns Innovate and Innovate UK, we will be working with our delivery partner and partner organisations to promote this event which will give business leaders a chance to ask our specialist advisers their specific questions. In March we are planning to do an event which allows business leaders to share their own experiences since Britain left the European Union. This will give business leaders a chance to come together and talk about how they overcame challenges, the changes they needed to make and the support they were able to access. If there is demand we will run these sessions based on sector to offer maximum value for attendees.
- 4.3 **HELPLINE AWARENESS CAMPAIGN.** Jointly with the Chamber of Commerce we continue to promote our helpline to all businesses across the region and are running a social media campaign to raise awareness of this helpline through February and March. This campaign will run predominately on LinkedIn and targeted to ensure relevant leads are generated.
- 4.4 **CASE STUDIES.** Working with businesses we have supported to date; we will be creating a series of case studies to show how support from the Growth Hub can help businesses adapt and stay in control of changes they need to make. We have reached out to businesses who we have previously engaged with, and are working on producing case studies that can be used to promote our services and demonstrate to BEIS how their funding has been used to support businesses across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

## 5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no anticipated financial implications associated with this review.

## 6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 There are no significant legal implications arising from the recommendation.