

Hull and East Yorkshire LEP

Paper D – Growth Hub Operational Update

Report to the Business Support Board, 13 January 2022

Report from Jon Brunton, Growth Hub Manager and Laura Barley, Business Programme Manager

1. Summary

1.1. The HEY Growth Hub continues to deliver a suite of funded business support services in the region and is expanding its team with new job posts. This paper provides an operational update on the Growth Hub for the financial year to date.

2. Recommendations

2.1. That the Board notes the latest operational update.

3. Operational Update

3.1. The business advisor team continue to report high level of enquiries and engagement. The impact of Omicron is being felt across the area, with issues in the run up to Christmas reported by the hospitality sector, as well as the increase in staffing shortages resulting from covid related absences.

3.2. The Growth Hub's **start up support** offer continues to see consistent levels of interest in the one-to-many workshops and masterclasses. Due to the excellent feedback received from the pilot "Fast Track" programme (delivery of 10 start-up modules to a cohort of pre-start entrepreneurs), a further Fast-Track programme that will commence at the end of January 2022 has been commissioned.

3.3. The "Business Essentials" Programme being delivered to undergraduates, graduates, and alumni of the University of Hull continues to prove popular, with high levels of attendance at each of the sessions held. They will recommence in February.

3.4. A radio campaign to promote the start-up support available, in particular the Workshop and Masterclass programme, will commence on 10 January for four weeks. It is hoped that this will further increase engagement with the resources and support available.

3.5. The Start-Up Advisor for Hull left their post at the end of December to move to another job opportunity. Discussions are ongoing regarding recruitment of their replacement as this is linked to the availability of BEIS Growth Hub funding for 2022/23.

3.6. **Recruitment** to a number of other posts within the Growth Hub team has been ongoing since the last meeting. Due to conditions of external funding all three posts are fixed until 31 March 2022. The current position is as follows:

- **Gateway Triage Business Advisor** – recruitment process is now complete – new post-holder is starting w/c 17 January.
- **Workforce Development Business Advisor** – Carl Southgate joined the team in December. He is providing specialist support to businesses on all aspects of workforce development.
- **Made Smarter: Digital Transformation Specialist** – we were unable to attract a candidate to the role due to the short-term nature of the post. A number of additional activities have been undertaken by the team to increase uptake of businesses in Hull and East Yorkshire including a Digital Marketing campaign and increased promotion through telephone outreach activities. This has resulted in a marked increase in the level of interest in the Made Smarter programme which is now in line with the business base in the area.

3.7. The Peer Networks Programme continues to attract good levels of interest with 78 businesses signing up to participate to date and expressions of interest continuing to be received. Of the nine cohorts being delivered, one cohort has completed, four are currently in progress and a further four are due to commence later this month.

3.8. BEIS have confirmed that the Peer Networks programme will not be continued into 2022/23 so the programme will complete at the end of March 2022.

3.9. The Growth Hub review activities commenced in November with the first of the Task and Finish Group meetings held. Further details of this are provided as part of a separate paper.

4. Annual Review 2020/21

4.1. The postponed Annual Growth Hub Review meeting with colleagues who operate the national programme from CLGU on behalf of BEIS was held on 06 January 2022. It was an extremely positive picture for the period 2020/2021 at both a national and local level. The Humber Growth Hub's performance – extremely strong, highlights include:

- More than doubling the “reach” of the GH in one year from 17,000 to 42,000 businesses or individuals reached (comprised of enquiries, website hits and general engagement activities)
- More than trebling the number of light touch business engagements from 2,400 to 9,000, with 11,000 businesses and pre-start individuals supported
- Increasing the activity under all the three areas of light touch, intermediate and high intensity support
- 81 individuals who were helped to start a new business
- Customer friendly website with useful content, with a site structure and content review of the Growth Hub website underway

- Very high levels of performance throughout Covid, EU and LEP geography transition
- Client satisfaction rate of 99% in comparison to the national average of 93%
- Relevant and impactful use of additional uplift funding
- Good working relationship with government and the local team
- Growth Hub review – previous external evaluation seen as positive, as well as the continued approach to continuous improvement taken this year with strategic direction from the BSB and task group involvement; focus groups, telephone outreach etc and review of business intelligence reporting.

5. Financial and resource implications

- 5.1. All Growth Hub activity is accounted for via externally funded programmes. Confirmation of BEIS funding for the Growth Hub delivery in the 2022/23 financial year is still awaited.