

GREATER BRIGHTON ECONOMIC BOARD
WORTHING TOWN HALL - 22.10.25
MINUTES

Attendees:

Cllr Bella Sankey (Chair), Cllr Martin Lury, Cllr Jeremy Gardner, Cllr Sophie Cox, Cllr Robert Eggleston, Jess Gibbons, Andrew Swayne, Karl Roberts, Paul Brewer, Kathryn Hall, Dan Power, Peter Sharp, Lewis Church, Stan Lucas, Steve Skelton, Dean Orgill Annie Roebuck, Tom Cottam, Natasha Bridge, Andy Hill, Francis Mitchell,

1 – Procedural Business

- A) There were no declarations of substitution.
- B) There were no declarations of interest
- C) There were no exclusions of press or public.

2 – Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- 2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as correct record.

3 – Chair's Communications

- 3.1 The chair stated the following:

Good morning, everyone,

I'd like to begin today's meeting by addressing two important developments that impact our region's economic landscape.

Devolution

In December, the government released the much-anticipated English Devolution White Paper, which outlines the framework for transferring greater powers and resources to regional authorities with a clear ambition for devolution to reach every part of the country to support local growth.

This initiative aims to empower local governments, enhance economic autonomy, and tailor policies more closely to our unique needs.

Following special cabinet meetings in East and West Sussex and Brighton & Hove on 9th January, all three councils agreed to submit an expression of interest to the Government to form a Mayoral Strategic Authority for Sussex and to join the

Devolution Priority Programme which would put us on an accelerated timeframe. A decision from Government is expected in the coming weeks.

This Board was born from a City Deal in 2014, which was a form of devolution. As this new chapter in the devolution journey evolves, the Board will keep close to the developments in Sussex and work to support collaboration to drive economic growth in the region.

DBT Tech Team Visit: Outcomes

In November we hosted a successful 2-day visit of colleagues from the Technology Investment Team at the Department of Business & Trade. The team work with overseas investors to attract investment into the UK. This visit was a great opportunity for us to showcase why this region is such a fantastic place for businesses, particularly technology businesses. The visit was received positively and the DBT team were impressed by the presence and participation of senior representatives of the universities, colleges, business support organisations, businesses and local authorities throughout the visit, demonstrating the importance Greater Brighton places on inward investment. Thank you all for your support with it.

They recognized our region's burgeoning strength in quantum computing, a field where we have demonstrated remarkable progress and potential. Our region can help the UK to capitalize on its research excellence in quantum computing to give rise to a world-class industry sector. To realise this ambition, government funding is needed. I raised this to Peter Kyle, Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, and as a result, a ministerial visit has been scheduled for him to see the quantum computing potential of the region first hand. The Board will provide a quote and photo to include on the day, send a letter of support following the visit to demonstrate the importance of the sector to the region and continue our dialogue with DSIT. Following our meeting today please stick around so we can take this photo.

Kathryn Hall presented an overview of Burgess Hill's Science and Technology Park, emphasizing the significant growth being delivered at Burgess Hill, as well as local facilities, services and its gigabit connectivity. The primary request was assistance from government to enable delivery by increasing capacity at the key A23/A2300 junction. In response, departments across government are working with the Council. It is hoped this approach will enable collaborative support from multiple government departments, to fully realise the region's growth potential.

Papers for today

NHS Sussex ICB

In July I received a letter from the NHS Sussex ICB formally requesting to join the Board. Last Board meeting we heard from Amy Galea, their Chief Integration & Primary Care Officer about the rationale for them joining the Board. In that meeting

we agreed that we were supportive of including them as a Board member. Since then, each Council has formally ratified this membership extension. This topic is coming back to the Board today to officially approve that the NHS Sussex ICB should join the Board.

Sussex Energy

The Board launched the Sussex Energy Mission in July. The Sussex Energy update paper highlights the progress made since the last Board meeting in October. Building a Sussex-wide network of sustainability networks to co-create the Sussex Energy Programme is critical to its success and to build towards this there has been engagement with a wide group of sustainability experts across Sussex, including all Local Authorities. The key development has been the establishment of a Core Network of sustainability experts to steer the programme, which includes representation from each of the Sussex upper tier authorities and the South Downs National Park Authority. Building these relationships has been achieved through a diligent effort within a complex and sensitive environment. The Core Network are developing a proposal for a forum to enable engagement of a wider group of sustainability stakeholders, for knowledge sharing and to shape the Sussex Energy programme.

4 – Unleashing Potential-Creative Industries

- 4.1 Lewis Church introduced the report for this item and delivered a presentation providing an overview of the Creative Industries Strategic Industry Plan, stating that Sussex is a major hub of creativity and industry in the UK.
- 4.2 Lewis Church provided further overview of the growth of the sector as well as providing a breakdown of the sectors workforce within Sussex.
- 4.3 Lewis Church stated that the sector was growing faster than both the local economy and other hubs for the creative sector across the UK.
- 4.4 Lewis Church outlined the challenges faced by creative industries and provided three areas of focus to support the industry (Ensure understanding, ensure training, and offer support).
- 4.5 Lewis Church outlined how each area of focus would be delivered locally, and stated that Central Government would be providing further support.
- 4.6 Andrew Swayne stated that he was pleased with the report and its compatibility with the forthcoming Combined Sussex County Authority.

4.7 It was stated the number of students studying to enter creative sectors in Sussex and explained that more work could be done to advertise careers and development in the industry.

4.8 It was stated the importance of freelance work in creative industries.

4.9 Sophie Cox welcomed the report and suggested looking into how local education could feed into creative industries.

4.10 Sophie Cox also emphasised the importance of transport links in unlocking opportunities for locals wishing to enter creative industries.

4.11 Martin Lury commended the report and suggested that schools could refocus towards the arts to both assist local creative industries and improve the mental health of students.

4.12 The Chair questioned what else could be done to assist people entering the creative industries in the county.

4.13 Dan Power suggested that success stories be shared to advertise the achievements, impact and contribution of the sector.

4.14 The Chair invited further action on creative comms to advertise the sector.

4.15 The Chair commended the report and emphasised the importance and impact of the sector.

4.16 A vote was moved that unanimously agreed the recommendations of the report.

5 – Sussex Energy Update October 2025

5.1 Natasha Bridge introduced the report for this item and delivered a presentation.

5.2 Natasha Bridge provided a detailed overview of the focuses of Sussex Energy, as well as the milestones achieved and further development goals of the organisation.

5.3 Natasha Bridge stated the success of the first Sussex Energy Forum meeting in July 2025, and shared details of collaborative organisations that had joined

the forum.

- 5.4 The Chair provided an overview of the history and foundation of Sussex Energy and emphasised the importance of local energy independence.
- 5.5 The Chair stated that the Government was keen to expand local energy infrastructure that could lead to 4000 new jobs in the sector nationally.
- 5.6 Andrew Swayne stated that he was pleased to see Sussex Energy taking shape and requested a future update on the number of jobs created locally by Sussex Energy.
- 5.7 Andrew Swayne stated the need for a good local energy settlement for the country from Central Government.
- 5.8 It was stated that the Sussex region was focused on the expansion of the clean energy sector.
- 5.9 The Chair stated that they were pleased to host the Secretary of State for Energy and Net Zero and obtained a commitment from him to support the local energy sector.
- 5.10 A vote was moved that unanimously agreed the recommendations of the report.

6 – Economic Opportunities Study

- 6.1 Andy Hill delivered a verbal update on this item and invited Kieran and Luke to present the economic opportunities study.
- 6.2 Kieran stated that the study was approximately 50% complete and provided an overview of the study's objectives (to understand, identify, and recommend).
- 6.3 Kieran provided an overview of the work completed to date, as well as outlined the themes of devolution and how devolution could benefit project delivery within the county ahead of the foundation of the Combined Sussex Authority.
- 6.4 Kieran provided an additional overview of the county's international industry gateways and stated their importance in the development of the local economy, citing examples such as Gatwick Airport, Shoreham Port,

Newhaven Port, and Brighton City Airport).

6.5 Luke provided a brief overview of what devolution could mean for the area as well as a breakdown of local development opportunities in skills and employment.

6.6 The Chair commended the presentation.

6.7 Martin Lury questioned how A-roads in Sussex could be unlocked in the context of the counties growing population and suggested that a radical solution could be required.

6.8 Steve Skelton commended the presentation and stated the need to progress conversations and build on collaborative strengths across the region.

6.9 Steve Skelton provided an overview of the inclusive growth strategy and stated the huge potential of the Sussex Combined Authority.

6.10 Kieran stated that lessons had been learned from other Mayoral Combined Authorities and emphasised the need for ambition in delivering projects that could be adopted as policy by a future Sussex Mayor.

6.11 Kieran stated that the Greater Brighton Area had been waiting for a fully integrated mass transport plan for decades, further stating the need for a multi-faceted approach through rail and bus contracts to bring the county together.

6.12 Luke stated that local transport was a substantial barrier to local educational, career, and economic development.

6.13 Karl Roberts questioned what additional strategic problems could be resolved by a future Sussex Mayor to unlock further development, using water infrastructure as an example.

6.14 Jeremy Gardner suggested broadening the scope of the proposed transport policy to include more methods of transport.

6.15 Sophie Cox stated that the 'how' was missing from the report and questioned how, for example, transport could materially be improved in Sussex. Sophie Cox requested more information on this in future.

6.16 Kieran stated that Combined Authority Mayors have a unique ability to facilitate dialogue for development and emphasised the importance of

allowing skills to develop within the county.

6.17 Andrew Swayne highlighted the demographic differences across the geographies of Sussex and suggested the identification of risks to development and delivery of the project to ensure robust business cases, especially in the context of obtaining funding from Central Government.

6.18 Kieran agreed the importance of a risk register to identify potential issues and obstacles. Kieran thanked members for their questions and comments and highlighted the importance of engaging younger people in project delivery, as well as bolstering and developing the visitor economy in the wider Greater Brighton region.

6.19 The Chair thanked members for their contributions and commended representatives from Litchfields.

6.20 The Chair suggested the investigation of regional development opportunities in terms of health, mental health, and substance abuse.

The meeting concluded at 15:42.

