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|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Subject:</b>          | <b>Dissolution of the Greater Brighton Economic Board</b> |                                                                                    |  |
| <b>Date of Meeting:</b>  | <b>7 October 2026</b>                                     |                                                                                    |  |
| <b>Report of:</b>        | <b>Chair, Greater Brighton Economic Board</b>             |                                                                                    |  |
| <b>Contact Officers:</b> | <b>Name:</b>                                              | <b>Andy Hill</b>                                                                   |  |
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| <b>Ward(s) affected:</b> | <b>All</b>                                                |                                                                                    |  |

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE****1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 For some time, it has been clear the Greater Brighton Economic Board “The Board” would be dissolved once the Sussex and Brighton Strategic Authority (SBSA) was established. The timing of this was subject to the maturity of the SBSA organisation, and at the Board meetings since January 2026, papers have been produced outlining progress and recommending a pathway towards an orderly dissolution, with September being one possible option.
- 1.2 The [most recent paper](#) on this subject, presented at the 24 June Board meeting, outlined several considerations that the Board may wish to take into account before confirming to proceed towards orderly dissolution. These considerations related to the extent to which the Board’s flagship mission, Sussex Energy, had been embedded and integrated within the SBSA, and that the Board’s other key strategic priority areas, including the Creative Industries and inward investment, had been recognised as priorities for the SBSA.
- 1.3 In June the Board agreed that these decision considerations seemed sensible, and based on that, took the view that it would be too early to seek dissolution in September. Instead, the Board agreed to seek contributions from members to cover the Board’s operational costs from September-December 2026, with a view to finalise a decision to dissolve the Board in December at the following Board meeting (7 October).

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1. That the Board notes that as of September 2026, good progress has been made regarding engagement with SBSA, and that the SBSA are close to publishing the draft Prosperity Strategy.
- 2.2. That the Board prepares and submits a consultation response to the draft Prosperity Strategy.
- 2.3. That the Board agrees in principle to dissolve on 31 December 2026, subject to arrangements being agreed for the transfer of any existing contracts held by the

Accountable Body e.g. Sussex Energy commissioned work and the arrangements set out at recommendation 2.4.

- 2.4. That the Board receives a final budget at its December 2026 meeting and agrees that if dissolution costs are identified which could exceed the current budget, the Accountable Body (Brighton & Hove City Council) will seek to apportion these costs equitably across Board members, in line with the original Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) at Appendix 1.

### **3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The Board agreed that the initiatives proposed through [Integration Proposal](#) (March 2026) represented important strategic, delivery and partnership assets which have the potential to support emerging SBSA priorities, strategies and investment activity. Given the differing nature and maturity of these initiatives, the Board considered it important that progress be demonstrated towards their future positioning, continuity and integration within SBSA strategy and plans before dissolution is confirmed.
- 3.2 In addition, the Board wished to see the value and momentum developed through over a decade of activity, reflected in SBSA future plans to avoid activity pausing or fragmenting.
- 3.3 In the [2026/27 Operational Arrangements](#) paper presented in March, the Board agreed to two budget periods; one covering the period April-September 2026, and the second from October 2026-March 2027.
- 3.4 The recommendation in March was that at the June Board meeting, progress would be reviewed and a decision taken as to whether to seek dissolution in September 2026 or look to continue operations until March 2027. It was noted that three months would be required to provide notice to officers impacted by closure, so a decision to dissolve the Board in September would need to be taken in June.
- 3.5 Given the differing nature of the initiatives proposed through the Integration Proposal, the Board understood that dissolution should not be determined by a single event or formal transfer decision alone, but by the progress made to provide confidence that:
- i. live programmes can continue effectively supported by identified resource;
  - ii. strategic evidence and commissioned work have identified “landing zones” within SBSA structures;
  - iii. governance, accountability and sponsorship arrangements are emerging;
  - iv. and the collaborative relationships and delivery capacity developed through the Board’s work can continue under SBSA arrangements.
- 3.6 The June paper set out the following considerations, which intended to support the Board’s assessment of transition readiness and inform discussion regarding the most appropriate timing for orderly dissolution.

## **Sussex Energy transition considerations**

- 3.7 Sussex Energy is the most operationally advanced and delivery-critical initiative within the Integration Proposal. The extent to which confidence existed regarding its future continuation within SBSA arrangements would likely to be a significant consideration in determining the appropriate timing for dissolution.
- 3.8 The Board recognised that SBSA may ultimately determine its own regional targets and strategic framing through development of the Prosperity Strategy, Local Growth Plan, Spatial Development Strategy and other emerging strategies. Accordingly, the Board is not seeking formal adoption of the Sussex Energy Mission target itself (i.e. energy neutrality by 2040) as a prerequisite for transition. Rather, there was demonstrable progress towards the programme being embedded within SBSA plans.
- 3.9 The situation in June was that whilst positive engagement had taken place and there was recognition of the value of Sussex Energy as a live regional programme, many organisational and governance arrangements within SBSA remained at a fairly early stage. Discussion with officers has started to propose consideration is given to how Sussex Energy governance, coordination and communications activity could align with emerging SBSA structures, but the SBSA's first AGM, where some of the future governance arrangements would become more clear, wasn't until July.

## **Wider initiative transition considerations**

- 3.10 The Board recognised that the remaining initiatives proposed through the Integration Proposal are primarily evidence based, strategic frameworks and partnership platforms rather than live delivery programmes. Discussions with SBSA officers had indicated recognition that the initiatives represent useful regional evidence bases, partnership platforms and strategic assets capable of informing future SBSA priorities and activity.
- 3.11 Discussion with officers had started to propose that consideration is given to where initiatives and evidence bases may align within emerging SBSA portfolios, strategies, and work programmes. Documents have been sent to SBSA officers to incorporate into evidence collation for the Prosperity Strategy. There is positive recognition of the value of wider partnership-led initiatives and collaboration platforms, although future engagement and coordination arrangements remain to be determined through SBSA structures.
- 3.12 A meeting in early August brought together a number of senior SBSA officers including their Inclusive Growth Lead and Investment Lead, with members of the Sussex Energy Partner Group, to discuss Sussex and Brighton Regional Energy Opportunities and Priorities - a document that was presented to the Board in January and has since been ratified with the Sussex Energy Partner Group, districts and boroughs and the wider Sussex Energy Forum.

## Conclusion and recommendation

- 3.13 The intention was that the Board could use the considerations to help inform its judgement regarding the appropriate timing for orderly dissolution. The requirement is not completion of every element before dissolution can proceed, but to support an informed assessment of transition confidence, programme continuity and organisational readiness.
- 3.14 Discussions regarding future positioning, sponsorship and organisational arrangements within SBSA were still emerging, so the Board had to carefully consider whether sufficient confidence currently existed regarding the continuity and future development of Sussex Energy and wider Board initiatives to support dissolution at that stage. The conclusion and recommendation from the June meeting were that pursuing a September dissolution was not prudent given the progress made in establishing the SBSA.

## December dissolution

- 3.15 As noted in 3.3, the [2026/27 Operational Arrangements](#) presented to the Board in March 2026, set out two budget options; one covering the period from April-September 2026 and another from April 2026-March 2027. Whilst the Board agreed for operations to continue beyond September, the other initially proposed endpoint of March 2027 seemed a long way ahead, and the Board was reluctant to commit funding for a further six months given the progress made in establishing the SBSA through the spring and early summer, and the future timescales that the SBSA were working towards.
- 3.16 The methodology described in 3.5 was intended to provide a flexible framework through which the Board can continue to assess transition progress and organisational readiness. This would enable the Board to review progress again at the next meeting and determine whether conditions are emerging which would support an orderly dissolution in December 2026, whilst retaining March 2027 as the latest planned dissolution point if further transition time is considered beneficial.
- 3.17 Referenced in 3.8 are three key strategy documents that the SBSA will develop and publish. These documents will set out the priorities, outcomes and wider devolution parameters for the region. The first strategy to emerge will be the Prosperity Strategy, which is currently in draft format. The draft is due to be published in November, after which it will be out for consultation for before being finalised and adopted in early 2027.
- 3.18 Conversations with SBSA have been positive with acknowledgement that the Sussex Energy Mission cuts across a number of key themes and priorities as well as sustainability, including inclusive growth, skills and resilience, and that it will help guide investment decisions.
- 3.19 The recommendation at 2.3 is that the Board now formally agree to move towards a formal dissolution in December.

- 3.20 As highlighted in the January Board Paper, consideration will need to be given to additional costs that could be incurred by the dissolution of the Board, including any employment liabilities and ongoing costs such as maintenance of the Sussex Energy website.
- 3.21 If dissolution costs are identified which could exceed the current budget, the Accountable Body (Brighton & Hove City Council) will seek to apportion these costs across the Local Authority Board members, based on working age population, in line with the original Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) at appendix 1. Likewise, any surplus remaining in the Board budget, once all costs have been covered, would be apportioned across Board members following the same methodology.
- 3.22 It is proposed in recommendation 2.4 that a final budget be presented at the next meeting in December, which will address the points covered in 3.20 and 3.21 above.

#### **4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 4.1 The alternative to a December dissolution would be for the Board to continue until March 2027, as per one of the original options put forward and agreed. This would require further contributions from Board members, as the budget secured until now will only keep the Board operational until December.
- 4.2 Board Members are aware that whilst the Board and SBSA operate in parallel, there is the potential of duplication of effort and time, which both the Board and SBSA are keen to avoid so far as possible. As current Board priorities and responsibilities progressively transfer into SBSA structures, there comes a point at which Board will effectively become redundant, and it is likely this point will arrive before March 2027.

#### **5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 There are no direct community engagement or consultation arising directly from this paper. However, stakeholder engagement is crucial to the success of Sussex Energy and relationships through the transition will be at the forefront. Further engagement with SBSA leadership and partners will need to take place to ensure a smooth transition of the Programme and other key initiatives.

#### **6. CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 Given that Sussex & Brighton will be covered by a strategic authority which will assume many of the Board's responsibilities and activities, the Board has been seeking an orderly dissolution at the optimal time. An optimal time would be the point at which the Board has clarity and confidence around the key initiatives proposed through the Integration Proposal regarding their future positioning, continuity and integration within SBSA arrangements.

- 6.2 Given the progress made during the summer, especially around development of the draft Prosperity Strategy, which is now close to publication, the recommendation is that the Board commit to proceed to orderly dissolution.

## **7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

### Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The operational costs of the Board have been funded through contributions from board members in accordance with the 2026/27 Operational Arrangements. This paper recommends that the board agrees to be dissolved in December 2026. If approved, a final budget position will be presented to the Board in December 2026.
- 7.2 Dissolution of the Board may give rise to additional one-off costs, including any employment-related liabilities, contractual commitments and ongoing costs associated with legacy assets or activities. Should dissolution costs exceed the resources currently available, Brighton & Hove City Council, as the Accountable Body, will assess the additional costs from each member in accordance with the cost-sharing arrangements set out in the Memorandum of Understanding. Any surplus remaining following settlement of all liabilities will similarly be returned to members on the same basis.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Haley Woollard, Head of Finance*

*Date: 28/09/26*

### Legal Implications:

- 7.4 The recommendations of this report provide for the orderly dissolution of the Board by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2026. As such this report proposes the dissolution of the Board subject to the final arrangements being made as set out in this report, including transfer of any Accountable Body functions which have been agreed by the members of the Board should continue beyond the Board's dissolution (such as Sussex Energy) and the accounting for any final liabilities to be apportioned between the members. It is intended that the final closure of the Board will be subject to a final resolution at the December Board meeting.

*Lawyer Consulted: Siobhan Fry – Head of Legal - Commercial BHCC*

*Date: 29/09/26*

### Equalities Implications:

- 7.5 None directly arising from this report.

### Sustainability Implications

- 7.6 None directly arising from this report.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

### **Appendices:**

- Greater Brighton Economic Board Memorandum of Understanding

### **Background Documents:**

- Transition & Dissolution Pathway (June 2026)
- Integration Proposal (March 2026)
- Operational Arrangements 2026/27 (March 2026)
- Transitioning Towards the Sussex & Brighton Strategic Authority (January 2026)

