

APPENDIX 1 – Open for Growth – Peer Review of support to the economy and local businesses in East Sussex

3. Recommendations

To support the East Sussex councils achieve their priorities of growth and inward investment, the peer challenge team has made the following recommendations:

R1: Leadership

- Use the emerging consensus around the SEP as a catalyst for driving forward the next round of Local Plans
- Raise the standards and improve the consistency of the councils' 'open for growth' services including a more consistently positive and proactive approach to the delivery of the planning system, especially development management in East Sussex
- Build consensus across the councils and develop a common and consistent strategic approach to support a shared vision and understanding of the role of house building as an economic generator, with this linked to the economic growth and inclusion strategy
- Focus on a small number of achievable infrastructure projects which are essential to the delivery of economic growth.

R2: Team East Sussex

- Develop, with Team East Sussex and East Sussex councils, an East Sussex economic growth strategy, following the SEP submission and determination. This should set out an achievable number of deliverable and time limited priorities to focus activity, progress at pace and prioritise resources.
- Develop Team East Sussex as the partnership to co-ordinate the delivery vehicles for the East Sussex economic growth strategy in the federated structure of the LEP, to:
 - operate at a new level of maturity based on openness and trust between the partners
 - involve key public/private/third sector players as an executive driving force for the economic growth agenda
 - create the East Sussex 'narrative' which reflects the varying need and ambition across the county and which sets out an agreed vision for the future
 - Ensure the right economic partnerships exist to deliver and initiate action and strategic thinking at a local and thematic level
 - Encourage leadership and participation by all partners
 - Operate a 'light touch' approach that values innovation and creativity by all partners and enables rather than constrains this.
- Map the micro and niche clusters of business activity in East Sussex so that councils can engage with these commercial interests to understand their needs and be better able to provide support.

R3: **Partnership working**

- Be open to new opportunities to work more closely with existing partners to maximise outcomes. But also look out for opportunities to work with wider and new partners.
- Review different governance models to ensure partnerships are effective and are inclusive of the business sector, the third sector and community agencies to maximise social value and economic growth
- Stretch ambition and trust by combining resources to improve business access to services and to develop collective capacity
- Councils help each other with the hard choices regarding the Duty to Co-operate while agreeing and incorporating priorities across the area
- Branding will be essential as will the need to recognise when to market as 'East Sussex' and when to market as 'specific areas' of the county (understand and play to collective and individual strengths as necessary) in a way which maximises the economic growth, opportunity and benefits for business and residents
- Work together to establish a more positive, proactive approach to the delivery of the planning system, especially development management, in East Sussex.

R4: **Business focus**

- Focus procurement activities where they will have the most chance of success in supporting local businesses while delivering value for money
- Review, along with partners, procurement activities across the councils with a view to developing new procedures to promote and enhance opportunities for local businesses
- Continue to recognise tourism and culture across the county as important elements for growth and consider building resources to further support these parts of the economy
- Ensure that employers and business are able to influence and shape the skills and training priorities for the East Sussex economy with education and skills providers
- Review the performance of Locate East Sussex and inward investment activities, with a view to evaluating whether increased resources would deliver added value.

R5: **Key message**

- East Sussex is poised to accelerate growth but this needs collective vision driven by a strategic view
- Continue to build on partnerships across the county and understand when to work collectively and when to work independently. The consensus already achieved and the proven track record is the way for councils to deliver economic growth for their communities. This approach may require individual councils to trade some control on certain issues in exchange for enhanced rates of growth and prosperity across the county as a whole. Partnerships between councils are not constrained by Team East Sussex and may include additional regional, national and international working.
- Working together and stretching the boundaries for closer working will build trust and lead to mature working relationships between councils and partners.