

**APPENDIX II-****THAMES VALLEY BERKSHIRE BUSINESS GROWTH HUB****General Background:**

Thames Valley Berkshire Business Growth Hub's main activities:

- A web portal ([www.berkshirebusinesshub.co.uk](http://www.berkshirebusinesshub.co.uk)) for Thames Valley Berkshire's businesses. The web site directs enquirers to information and sources of business advice and support including national programmes such as UKTI, hosts an events calendar, and includes an overview of grants, debt and equity finance for growing businesses.
- A business network to bring together Thames Valley Berkshire businesses to benefit from events, short training workshops topical activities across the area to provide knowledge and information exchange for growth businesses.
- Network activity is delivered in partnership with local touch points such as Slough Aspire Centre, the Henley Centre for Entrepreneurship at the University of Reading and the Buzz Network in West Berkshire to ensure the Growth Hub can be accessed easily through local points of contact.
- A programme of business clinics, advice, coaching and support from an experienced team of business people to develop business strategies and plans for growth. The Growth Hub delivers support directly to eligible high growth business and partners with national programmes (UKTI, Innovate UK), and with the LEP's Funding Escalator.
- Business leadership training is delivered through the Berkshire Business Accelerator at Henley Business School.

**Growth Hub update – December 2015:**

**Phase one** (April 2014 to June 2015), funded by the Regional Growth Fund, concluded in June 2015 with all funding fully defrayed. All key milestones and targets were met namely:

- 250 businesses engaged
- 154 businesses assisted
- 15 pre start/start ups assisted
- £488k invested in 34 projects through a competitive grants process.
- The minimum of £1.8m match funding required was exceeded. Private equity investment into client companies was £2.782m plus a commercial loan of £180k. Leverage of other public funds into Growth Hub clients totals £779k – this includes loans from the LEPs Funding Escalator.
- 126 business leaders trained through Berkshire Business Accelerator (partly funded through the Growth Hub) and other short workshops.

**Phase two** (from July 2015), primarily funded by the Local Growth Deal, continues to deliver the core services outlined above. No cash grants are available for phase two.

All KPIs and project targets are on track as at end November 2015:

<b>Growth Hub Delivery Plan numbers</b>			
	Outputs as at 30.11.15	Target/KPI	Comment
Web visitors, referrals, tel enquiries	4,366 unique web visitors 177 enquiries, referrals (132 web enquiries, 45 tel & referral)	1000	On track

Network events programme, workshops and seminars	389	250	On track
Growth Hub clinics	33	60	On track
Advisory input	39	50	On track
Coaching input	42	50	On track
Henley leadership training	18	36	On track

## Local Partnerships

### Touch Points

The six Berkshire unitary authorities are represented on the Growth Hub Steering Group by the chair of the Berkshire Economic Development Officers' Group (BEDOG). The Growth Hub operating partner updates BEDOG each month and reports to the City Deal Skills Steering Group monthly. Continued dialogue with all partners is a priority for the Hub operating partner. The latest joint activity & partners working together includes:

- Bracknell - a progress meeting with Anneken Priesack, one of economic development team in Bracknell, resulted in a renewed agreement to plan a programme of joint activity
- Reading – continued close cooperation with Henley Business School, University of Reading. The Growth Hub supports an on-going programme of events under the headlines Enterprise Talks and the SME Forum. The Growth Hub is also in dialogue with Reading UK CIC with regards to supporting a forthcoming Pop Up Business School in Reading.
- Slough – a programme of joint activity has been agreed and the details are being finalised. For the Slough Business Support Group this project is being led by Fiona Jones at Slough Aspire Centre in conjunction with the Growth Hub. Activity includes twice monthly drop in clinics, attendance at regular networking, delivery of Growth Hub hosted events and events supported by the Growth Hub.
- West Berkshire – further discussion is needed to confirm a plan of action for joint events and workshops delivered by the Growth Hub in West Berkshire or delivered jointly with partners incl the BUZZ Network.
- Windsor & Maidenhead – BCA is used occasionally s a venue for events when appropriate. The Growth Hub will begin a dialogue with the recently recruited economic development officer in RBWM to plan a programme pf activity for 2016.
- Wokingham – monthly business advice clinics have been held at GROW @ Green Park, a LEP supported facility, since spring 2015. This increased to twice each month since September 2015. Regular events are held at the Science & Technology Centre, University of Reading, Earley Gate.

### Signposting

Since its inception, the Growth Hub team has actively referred clients to and received referrals from the national business support services including Business Growth Service (GrowthAccelerator and Manufacturing Advisory Service), UKTI and Innovate UK.

With the unexpected closure of the national Business Growth Service from 1 December 2015, the Growth Hub needs to re-assess its signposting and diagnosis role. At the time of writing, there is no further information to indicate whether additional funding will be available to expand Growth Hub activity.

[A post Spending Review Growth Hub Network Workshop held on 6 Jan confirmed £12m funding over 2016/17 and £12m 2017/18 for all Growth Hubs. BIS is working on plans for Hubs to draw down funds from April 16 to provide continuity; the exact mechanism is to be confirmed but there are no indications that this will be on a competitive basis.

As a result of the BGS closure the LEP has delayed the ERDF Call until the position on government funding of Growth Hubs is clearer and the call out can be shaped appropriately. Subject to Board agreement, the LEP will extend the Growth Hub contract with VitalSix beyond the current term end (31 March 2016) to allow time to shape the ERDF Call Out appropriately once government funding is clarified.]

The Berkshire Growth Hub is already being contacted by businesses wanting to know what support is still available; unlike other Growth Hubs, Thames Valley Berkshire has always had in its delivery plan the capacity of deliver advice and support to an extent but consideration needs to be given to avoid setting unrealistic expectations about the hands on/one-to-one support now available.

The challenge now faced by the Growth Hub is to manage resources with a potential increase in demand for advice and support, in particular from start up an early stage business that do not have the financial capacity to pay for private sector support.

### **Marketing Communications and Web Site**

The Growth Hub's refreshed web site will be live from January 2016. The latest news about the Business Growth Service has delayed the go live date because content and signposting to BGS services is available through the site. The aim of the new web site is to enable more effective 'self-serve' for business visitors.

A partner/touch point package of collateral will be available in January 2016 comprising pop-up banner for permanent display at touch points, collateral including A5 postcard and explanatory leaflet, web site package including logo & one liner to enable reciprocal links between web sites.

A communications plan is being agreed with partners to enable our extended networks of business contacts to raise awareness of the Growth Hub, its services and support.

In partnership with the six Local authorities, summary information about the Growth Hub is included in a one page flyer that will be included in the January 2016 mailing of rates demands to all business across Thames Valley Berkshire.

### **Events and Workshops**

A forward plan of events and workshops for 2016 is being developed. An evaluation of past activity in discussion with local touch points will inform the future plan.

Events scheduled for 2016 will include:

- Twice each month – Growth Hub clinics at Slough Aspire Centre and GROW @ Green Park. The principle of regular open clinics delivered by the Growth Hub advisory/coaching team is being discussed with other touch points.
  - Each month – Breakfast Briefings around the area with short topical briefings and/or case study presentations by client companies
  - Quarterly – Business Model Canvas half day strategy workshops
  - Regular topical half day workshops including Finance for non-financial managers, LinkedIn for Business, Protecting and managing your intellectual capital.
  - Regular SME Forum events in partnership with Henley Centre for Entrepreneurship at the University of Reading
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December 2015



Past clinics, events, workshops, networking delivered, hosted or supported by the Growth Hub include:

Twice each month - open drop in business clinics at Slough Aspire Centre and GROW @ Green Park

Four three day Berkshire Business Accelerator programmes delivered in phase two of the Growth Hub project during 2015

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- 26.11.15 Business Model Canvas strategy workshop, Wokingham
- 23.11.15 UoR SME Forum - Growth Hub supported
- 12.11.15 UKTI/TV Chamber event incl Growth Hub, presentation & two seminars
- 10.11.15 Berkshire Business Accelerator taster workshop, Wokingham
- 6.11.15 SME 100 Event (BusMag) Growth Hub supported, presentation made
- 30.10.15 TV Chamber - J6 Business Club - Growth Hub supported, presentation made
- 14.10.15 Berkshire Business Accelerator taster workshop, Newbury
- 16.9.15 LinkedIn for Business, Slough
- 4.9.15 Advanced LinkedIn clinics with the Growth Hub
- 11.8.15 SEO from the coalface, Reading
- 30.7.15 Berkshire Business Accelerator taster workshop, Reading
- 15.7.15 LinkedIn for Business, Maidenhead
- 9.7.15 Berkshire Business Accelerator taster workshop, Slough
- 3.6.15 LinkedIn for Business, Newbury
- 28.5.15 Food Network interest group, Reading
- 19.5.15 Food & Life Sciences Networking Event, Reading
- 22.4.15 Business Model Canvas Workshop, Newbury
- 21.4.15 Berkshire Business Accelerator taster workshop, Bracknell
- 17.4.15 Making your Company's Intangible Assets Work Harder, Reading
- 8.4.15 Finance for Non-Financial Managers, Maidenhead

### **Other observations and comments**

Helping businesses develop apprenticeship programmes remains an on-going challenge. For the ambitious growing businesses working with the Growth Hub there is not a straightforward way to service their need to understand and manage the process to establish an apprenticeship programme and recruit appropriate apprentices.

With an historic focus on the supply side for apprenticeships (young people) rather than the demand side, the smaller businesses serviced by the Growth Hub who will be creating new jobs, a review and refreshed emphasis on working with local businesses is still needed.

Ideally a single point of contact to account manage businesses through the process is required with an independent viewpoint not aligned to a particular college or training provider and with knowledge of courses outside Berkshire that may be relevant to the innovation and technology led business that often require higher apprenticeships to meet their skills needs for the future.

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**Susan Elliott**

Thames Valley Berkshire Business Growth Hub

16 December 2015

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