FORWARD LOOK WORDS FROM SARAH

Our economy has experienced a profound shock but, as we look ahead, there are good reasons to be positive.

Our partnership is stronger than it has ever been. Our Board is a great mix of business, local government and education leaders and it has been inspiring to see how they have come together to share their skills, knowledge and experience to develop innovative ideas to drive forward our economy. Over the last year we have improved our equality and representation through our recruitment but this will remain a focus as we move forward, ensuring diversity in all its forms is embedded in our work and that we speak on behalf of all communities and stakeholders.

We have a formidable record of delivery and are well placed to go further. We have been heartened by the recent allocation of £85m Getting Building Funding from Government and we know it is imperative to will deliver these projects at pace to ensure maximum impact. We will seek to influence future funding and investment from Government and other sources to support those sectors, businesses and communities which have been particularly hit by the pandemic.

It is vital that our future strategy is well informed and evidence-based so we are building a powerful intelligence base gathering together local socio-economic data, comparisons with national data and consulting with businesses on an on-going basis. Our work to support recovery and growth over the longer term will also be shaped by the anticipated White Paper on Devolution and Local Recovery, expected in Autumn 2020.

Great partnerships are key to our success. We are building a powerful network, working closer than ever with neighbouring LEPs and with MPs, ministers and government. We look forward to working ever closer with our extensive network of stakeholders and partners, using our collective scale to influence the future and to ensure the voice of business can steer the direction of our economy at this critical time.

Throughout all of this, we retain our commitment to listen to businesses across the South East area and to act on their concerns. We will use all means available to gather insights on the issues facing local business communities, and to ensure that their needs are met, their challenges recognised and that they can take opportunities that will drive growth.

As SELEP Chair and Deputy Chair, and with all SELEP Directors, we are committed to working in the open, to engaging widely and to shaping a south east economy that works for all stakeholders and communities. As we emerge from the first stages of the COVID-19 crisis, we hope you will work with us to enable a robust and sustainable recovery that will provide a platform for security, growth and future prosperity.