

SELEP Integration and Legacy Update October 2023

Earlier this year Government issued directions asking Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to align and ultimately transfer their activities to upper-tier councils in their areas. The South East LEP (SELEP) Strategic Board discussed this at its July 2023 meeting and the consensus was that the partnership should work to ensure a smooth and swift transition by March 2024. Work has been taking place in recent months to move towards this goal.

At the most recent SELEP Strategic Board Meeting (October 2023) an update was provided on progress towards transition, and the future for local growth activity in the South East is beginning to take shape.

The government has set out three broad functions that will be transferred to upper tier local authorities. From April 2024, responsibilities previously held by LEPs will be held by Local Authorities in each area. These include:

1. **Business representation:** ensuring clear mechanisms through which the voice of business can influence local economic policy decisions, and routes to ensure collaboration between the public and private sector. Government is encouraging upper-tier local authorities to work with new or existing 'Economic Growth Boards' made up of local business leaders and relevant representative bodies.
2. **Strategic economic planning:** Government is encouraging areas to produce or update evidence and intelligence based economic strategies to support local decision making.
3. **The delivery of government programmes (where directed):** In the South East this will include delivery of the remainder of SELEP's capital programme; future management and monitoring of the Growing Places Fund (GPF) capital loan programme; and oversight of and reporting on ongoing Local Growth Fund (LGF) and Getting Building Fund (GBF) projects until 2026-27.

SELEP enjoys excellent relations with local authorities across the South East and is working to ensure that the expertise, knowledge, networks, and partnerships that have been created are maintained and continue to flourish, and that our business communities have appropriate routes to influence as this transition is made.

We are working across 5 areas to progress plans for future arrangements. These are:

1. Governance & Capital Programmes
2. Partnerships & Networks
3. Data & Intelligence
4. Growth Hub & Business Support
5. Resourcing

These areas of work have culminated in a draft Integration Plan that focuses on setting out the tasks that need to take place between now and end of March 2024 to fully integrate LEP functions into local authorities. This was presented to the SELEP Strategic Board on 13th October 2023, with a final version to be available for December Strategic Board. This will be made available on the SELEP website.

Local Authorities across our area are pursuing their local models and arrangements. Updates on emerging arrangements for each area were provided at our recent Board meeting and will continue to be shared with relevant partners as they develop.

Looking across the SELEP footprint, future arrangements are likely to be based around three functional economic areas: East Sussex, Kent & Medway, and Greater Essex – combining the areas of Essex County Council, Thurrock Council and Southend On Sea City Council. These Greater Essex authorities are currently seeking to agree a Level 2 Devolution Deal with Government which will see additional powers and funding devolved to the local area. Further details can be found [here](#).

For Kent and Medway and East Sussex, the future working arrangements will build on the existing federated area structures and the successful existing partnerships of Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP) and Team East Sussex (TES).

Until the integration of functions is fully complete, SELEP will continue to work to achieve results for our region by bringing organisations together from public, private and education sectors. We will continue to work in this way to ensure that intelligence, expertise, and lessons learnt are taken forward into future working arrangements in each place.

As part of this, SELEP will be organising a series of activities to share lessons and expertise as part of our *integration and legacy plans*. This will include:

- a Lesson Learnt Webinar in November showcasing learning and best practice from previous EU funded projects delivered in the SELEP area, to support skills development, innovation, and business growth. This is taking place on 8th November 2023; further details can be found [here](#);
- showcasing the impact of our capital programme;
- hosting a ‘success in partnerships’ seminar in early 2024; and
- an in-person ‘Future of local growth and business leadership’ event where we will showcase future leaders and the ambition for local growth from each local area.

We are grateful to all partners and Board members who continue to give their time and support to the LEP. Our work to support economic growth across the South East remains important and our collaborative approach, which is fundamental to success, means we continue to have an impact.

Further details on transition will be shared over the coming months. If there are any areas of work that partners would like further detail or have queries, please contact hello@southeastlep.com