

South Midlands Business Board Terms of Reference

Opportunity

The South Midlands is an exciting region of growth and innovation, situated at the heart of the Oxford to Cambridge region. Representing six dynamic local authority areas, it is an formative time for the region as the Leaders of the six local authorities seek input from the business community to help shape economic strategy and focus for the region.

Purpose of the Business Board

The purpose of the Business Board is to advise the decision making of the South Midlands Authorities Board¹ on matters of specific interest to businesses, specifically on economic growth and development. The Business Board itself would be supported in its work by advisory groups that exist within the South Midlands, including the Growth Hub Board and the Careers Hub Steering Group who oversee the operational work of, and ensure a business voice input into the South Midlands services. These services are hosted by West Northamptonshire Council on behalf of the six authorities. The Business Board will play an important role in shaping future economic strategy and ensuring that regional priorities align with the needs and opportunities that businesses within the region face.

Key roles of the Board will include:

Input on Strategy:

- Providing advice on the development and shaping of economic strategy and day to day oversight of progress on implementation, on behalf of the South Midlands Authorities Board who decide on and own the strategy and local decision making.
- Providing an employer and business perspective for employment and skills challenges and informing related strategies for the region.
- Challenging thinking, exploring creative options and innovative ways to tackle challenges faced by businesses in the defined geography.
- Contributing to the wider economic growth agenda, both regionally and nationally.

Function:

- Providing a co-ordinated business voice for the private sector to inform, challenge and influence local and national economic policy by providing strategic business advice on economy, business, skills, transport, housing, UKSPF and future devolution deals.
- Representing business to the South Midlands Authorities Board to ensure relevant resources and provision are present and providing advocacy for the needs of businesses.
- Engaging with key stakeholders and businesses as and when required to provide advice, guidance and responses to consultation to assist the delivery of the South Midlands Authorities Board's strategic objectives for the region.
- Acting as sector champions for Board Members' areas of expertise – leading on engaging with local and national networks, bringing insight into discussions, and supporting stakeholder engagement with Officers on specific pieces of work.

¹ Or successor bodies as relevant

- Working with the South Midlands Authorities Board and Officers to identify key opportunities to engage the business community on influencing priorities with Government and maintain a role of developing local networks to support this.
- Being prepared to lead on and assist with key sub groups and focus areas – for example the Growth Hub, Careers Hub, or specific existing or new sector advisory groups.

Principles of the Business Board

- The Board will be diverse and representational of the businesses and stakeholders within the defined geography.
- The Board will have a clear relationship with the South Midlands Authorities Board, with the business chair (and other Members for relevant topics) being invited to be an associate Member of the South Midlands Authorities Board. A Leader from the Authorities Board will also lead on business engagement and at least one Authorities Board Member will attend the Business Board.
- The Board will provide an important strategic advisory role to the South Midlands Authorities Board.
- Conflicts of interest will be managed appropriately.
- All Board Members will be expected to sign a code of conduct before attending a board meeting.
- Board meetings will be supported by secretariat support provided by Officer support from within the transitioned LEP team.
- Recruitment to the Board will be open and transparent – through an open process involving an application process and interviews. A recruitment panel will oversee the process, with a Authorities Board Member chairing the panel.

Geographical Coverage:

The Business Board will cover the region of the South Midlands Authorities Board covering the areas of Bedford Borough Council, Central Bedfordshire Council, Luton Borough Council, Milton Keynes City Council, North Northamptonshire Council, West Northamptonshire Council and will have representation across all of the six authority areas.

Accountable To:

The Business Board will report into the South Midlands Authorities Board.

The Business Board will work closely with the South Midlands Growth Hub and South Midlands Careers Hub to help delivery to strategic objectives for the region.

Meetings:

There will be 4 meetings per year, lasting approximately 2 hours each, and an annual strategic Board away day.

There are additional opportunities to be involved in work-streams and sub-groups.

An agenda for each Board meeting shall be circulated at least 48 hours prior to the start of each meeting. Items for discussion shall include:

- matters referred by the South Midlands Authorities Board (or any of its Advisory Groups);
- matters referred by a Board Sub Group, or other relevant local / regional body;
- relevant consultations; or
- items put forward by any Board Member (with the agreement of the Chair).

Membership

The Business Board Membership will comprise of a maximum of 15 Members as follows:

Business representative organisation	1+
Key growth sectors (including property, infrastructure or development)	4+
Rural business representative (geography or sector)	1+
SME (small and medium enterprise) representative	1+
Large business representative	1+
Education representative	1+
VCSE representative organisation	1+
Local Authority Business Board representative *nominated by the South Midlands Authorities Board.	1

The Recruitment Panel shall nominate the initial Chair from amongst those recruited to the Board. In case of a Chair vacancy, the Business Board will nominate a new Chair which should be endorsed by the South Midlands Authorities Board.

Whilst all appointments to the Business Board will be on merit, in accordance with Government requirements, the Business Board as a public body board should reflect the diversity of society and welcome a range of skills and experience, and a requirement to ensure representation across all six authority areas.

The Business Board has the ability to co-opt members where appropriate to the Board to support the activity of the Board.

Terms

Private sector Members (including the Chair) are appointed for up to two consecutive 3-year terms. Co-opted Members will be appointed on a 1-year term to be reviewed annually.

Decision Making and Legal Status

The Business Board is an informal partnership which is an advisory group to the South Midlands Authorities Board. It does not have legal status to enter into contracts and will act through Milton Keynes City Council as the Accountable Body for the South Midlands Authorities Board or West Northamptonshire Council as the accountable body for transferred South Midlands LEP functions.

Quorum and Voting:

Quorum shall be whichever is the fewer of no less than 5 members, or 1/3 of the total voting membership. Online attendance shall be permitted and counted for quorum.

The public sector, co-opted Members, or attending guests do not have any voting rights.

Approval requires a simple majority.

The minutes should reflect all Board decisions, and specifically identify votes that are not unanimous. Minutes will not be made publicly available, but advisory resolutions to the South Midlands Board, will be published as part of usual practices for that body.

Accountable Body

Milton Keynes City Council is the Accountable Body for the South Midlands Authorities Board working in conjunction with West Northamptonshire Council as the Host of the transferred LEP functions.

Officer Support

The Business Board will be supported by appropriate Officers from the 6 Local Authorities, Growth Hub Manager and Careers Hub Strategic Hub Lead.

Conflict of Interest

Members will be required to adhere to the principles of the [Local Government Association Model Code of Conduct](#) and must register their interests and those of their spouse, their civil partner or partner (the categories set out in the Model Code) with the Board's secretary, on the proforma provided, within 28 days of taking up their position. They must also update their register within 28 days of any changes of circumstances.

Members must not personally financially gain from their knowledge gained from the Membership to the Business Board.

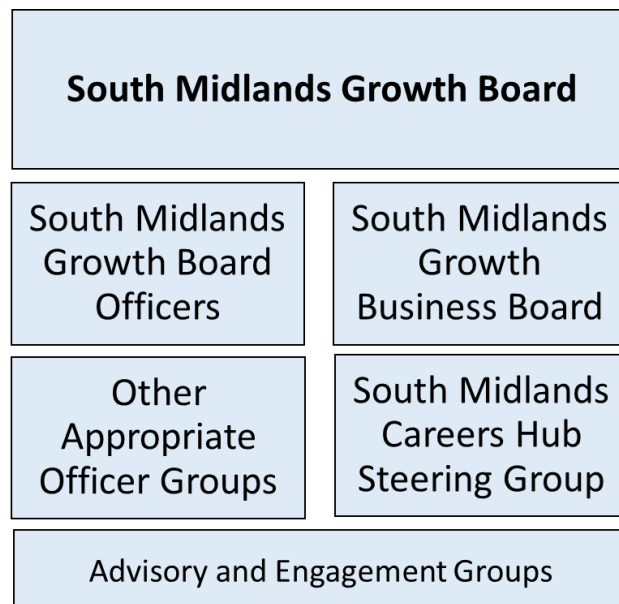
As the Board is an advisory (and not decision making) body, the threshold for declaring an interest and withdrawing from participating and voting is likely to be high, but members must be especially mindful of declaring any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (as defined in The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012).

Sub Groups

In addition to the Business Board, there are a number of advisory groups that provide advisory support including but not limited to:

- Growth Hub Board
- Careers Hub Steering Group
- Other sector or topic focussed advisory group

The Business Board will determine which sub groups and associated advisory groups provide appropriate additional insight and support as indicated in Figure 1 below.



Review:

The Terms of Reference for the South Midlands Business Board will be reviewed as is required, but no less than biennially.

The Board's secretary shall have authority to make minor typographical and any consequential amendments to the Terms of Reference in consultation with the Chair. Any such changes shall be reported to the next ordinary meeting for noting.