

Business Link South East – Partnership Update I

Working in partnership for South East businesses

Welcome to the first of a series of regular update letters – my opportunity to keep you informed on our current progress as we move towards a single, integrated Business Link service.

As you will be aware, we have been working closely with SEEDA and the current providers to ensure the new service arrangements address the challenges set out in SEEDA’s invitation to tender.



We will deliver the Business Link South East service from many local access points across the Region to ensure that the service is close to the communities we serve. To achieve this we will work closely with local and regional partners.

What’s been happening this month?

Our first priority is to ensure a seamless transition to the new service arrangements and minimise any disruption. This means we are focussed on effective integration of the seven existing organisations, the transfer of staff under TUPE, the gathering of information from across the region and extensive stakeholder engagement.

Our transition is progressing well and, as you can see from the table below, we are now consulting in detail with the Business Link staff, ready for ‘Go Live’ and Day 1 of the Business Link South East service.

Stage	Name	Dates	What can you expect?
1	Transition Preparation	October 2009 December 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular communication via established routes Active involvement with workstreams leaders Input to the Service Transformation Blueprint
2	Transition	January 2010 March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation with elected representatives Organisation structure shared Full Staff Engagement with individual consultations
		1 April 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TUPE transfer and Induction of Staff
3	Transformation Phase 1	April 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planned programme of transformation to deliver service blueprint.
4	Transformation Phase2	September 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embed service blueprint as business as usual

Transformation to the new service

We will work with SEEDA, partners and staff to deliver a Business Link South East service which serves:

- **Businesses** – by providing a consistent, high quality and locally accessible service
- **People** – by ensuring the Region is a great place to start and grow a business
- **Partners and stakeholders** – by delivering sustainable prosperity and maximise value for money
- **Staff** – a people based service with Personal Development as a key part of our vision and culture.

Understanding the new service:

We are committed to better front-line support for South East businesses and improved local access to a comprehensive range of business support services. We will support both established and start-up enterprises, and increase the take up of the service by businesses currently under-represented in the service.



We also recognise that having direct access to support that's on the doorstep of our local business communities is of critical importance. To ensure businesses can meet and engage with local Business Advisors, we will build on the current arrangements with stakeholders and partners, and establish up to 200 local access points across the region.

People:

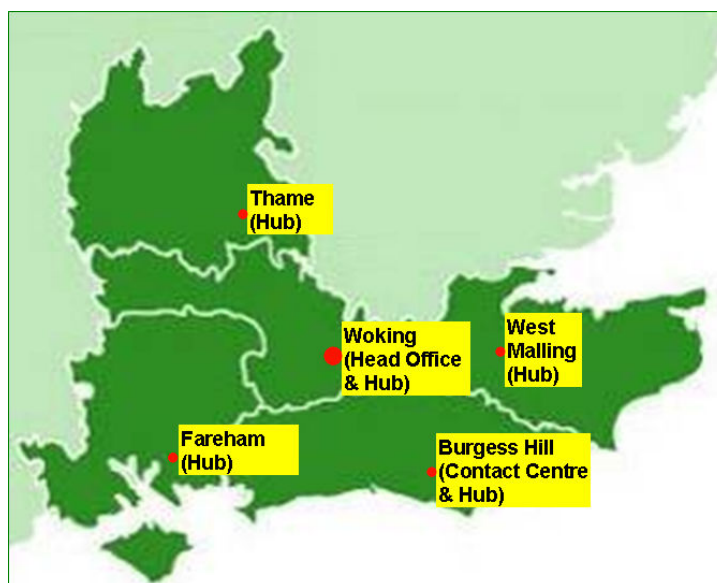
All current Business Link staff will TUPE Transfer across to Serco on 1st April 2010. Staff will transfer on their current terms and conditions, and continue to fulfil their current role.

Locations:

Most staff will continue to operate from their current location for the next few months. The aim is to minimise disruption and avoid any unnecessary inconvenience as we commence the new service arrangements.

We want to deliver a local, front line service, with an enhanced presence of remote sites that reach across the region. We think that approximately 200 access points will be required and we have agreement, in principal, for over 100 of these already.

The new business link service is aligned with SEEDA's area teams and will operate from 5 operational hubs, 2 of which will be central offices. It is our intention to locate these in Woking, Burgess Hill, Fareham, Thame and West Malling. Our advisers will be based in their local community, engaging with businesses at their offices, at our Hubs, or through the Local Access Points at partner locations across the Region.



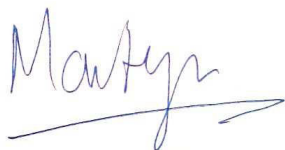
Leadership:

The process for recruiting a Chief Executive Officer for BLSE is now in full swing and we are focussed on finding the best possible candidate for this significant and challenging role. Over the coming weeks, short-listed candidates will participate in an intensive selection process, which includes an assessment centre and panel interviews. We will keep you up to date with our progress and would love the opportunity to introduce the Business Link management team to you as soon as they have been appointed.

Business as usual

Current operations and existing business processes will continue for the first few months and until the new service model has been implemented. For example, the way calls are answered, appointments are arranged and Intensive Assists are delivered will all continue as they did before 1st April for the short term.

Once again, as we work together for a seamless transition, thank you for your continued support. We very much look forward to working with you in the months and years ahead as we implement our plans to provide businesses all over the region with readily accessible Business Link support services to help them grow and prosper.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Martijn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right from the bottom of the name.

Martijn Noordewier,
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